Prizing African Literature: Awards and Cultural Value

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Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University

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March 2016

Declaration

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Dedication

To Dr. Mutuma Ruteere

Abstract

This study investigates the centrality of international literary awards in African literary production with an emphasis on the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (CWSSP). It acknowledges that the production of cultural value in any kind of setting is not always just a social process, but it is also always politicised and leaning towards the prevailing social power. The prize-winning short stories are highly influenced or dependent on the material conditions of the stories' production and consumption. The content is shaped by the prize, its requirements, rules, and regulations as well as the politics associated with the specific prize. As James English (2005) asserts, "[t]here is no evading the social and political freight of a global award at a time when global markets determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies" (298). This research focuses on the different factors that influence literary production to demonstrate that literary culture is always determined by the social, political and economic factors framing its existence.

The process through which contemporary African literature, mediated through the international prize, acquires value in the global literary marketplace is the major preoccupation of this study. I discuss the prevalence of prize narratives of pain and suffering, aptly defined as "the Caine aesthetic of suffering" (Habila 2013), and argue against a fixed interpretation of the significance of painful social and political realities. The study calls for a holistic approach to the analysis of postcolonial literature which has previously been labelled as exotic by market forces which commodify difference as strangeness. It recognises that African writers are participants in a crowded global literary scene and they, therefore, must learn to align their work with the market forces, usually dictated by the publishing and award institutions, by devising strategies of visibility within the literary world. My research, therefore, foregrounds the importance of marginality in contemporary African literature, acknowledging that for writers who have historically been classified as belonging to the margins of literature it is important to own that position and use it to dismantle the codes of power and domination evident in literary industry. As demonstrated through the prize stories, marginality is a powerful device used in the award sector to give voice to the unheard, the unseen, the dominated, in order to question disempowerment and domination. The study concludes that in the absence of economic autonomy, African literature will have to work within the limitations of external influence and patronage.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek die sentraliteit van internasionale literêre toekennings in die voortbrenging van Afrika literatuur met die klem op die Caine Prys vir Afrika skryfkuns (CP) en die Statebond Kortverhale Prys (CWSSP). Die studie erken dat die vervaardiging van kulturele waarde in enige konteks nie altyd net 'n sosiale proses is nie, maar ook deurgaans verpolitiseerd word met neigings na die heersende sosiale magte. Die bekroonde kortverhale is opmerklik beïnvloed deur of afhanklik van die materiële kondisies van die stories se produksie en verbruik. Die inhoud van 'n storie word as't ware gevorm deur die vereistes, reëls en regulasies van 'n toekenning sowel as deur die politieke verwantskap tot 'n spesifieke toekenning. James English (2005) beweer, "[t]here is no evading the social and political freight of a global award at a time when global markers determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies" (298). Hierdie navorsing fokus op die verskillende faktore wat literêre produksie beïnvloed om aan te toon dat literêre kultuur altyd bepaal word deur die sosiale, politieke en ekonomiese faktore wat dit omraam.

Die proses waardeur kontemporêre Afrika literatuur deur bemiddeling van internasionale toekennings waarde verkry in die globale literêre mark is die primêre fokus-area van hierdie studie. Ek bespreek die polemiek van bekroonde narratiewe wat hulself bemoei met pyn en leed, gedefinieer as "the Caine aesthetic of suffering" (Habila 2013), en argumenteer teen die gevolglike vaste interpretasie van die belang van 'n gepynigde sosiale en politiese realiteit. Hierdie studie roep vir 'n holistiese benadering tot die analise van postkoloniale literature wat voorheen gemerk was as eksoties deur die verbruikersmarkte wat handel dryf deur 'andersheid' te verkoop as 'vreemd'. Die navorsing gee toe dat Afrika skrywers deelnemers is in 'n wedywerende globale literêre landskap en daarom moet leer om hul werk in gelid te bring (of strategies te belig) met die markkragte wat gewoonlik voorgesê en beïnvloed word deur die publikasie- en prystoekennings instansies. Gevolglik fokus my navorsing op die belang van marginaliteit in kontemporêre Afrika literatuur. Dit is belangrik vir skrywers wat in die historiese konteks geklassifiseer was as marginaal of wie se werk na die uiterste grense van literatuur geskuif is, om die gemarginaliseerde posisie in te neem en vanuit daardie posisie sodoende die hegemoniese kodes en magstrukture van die literêre industrie uit te daag en af te breek. Soos uitgebeeld deur die bekroonde stories is marginaliteit 'n kragtige toestel wat gebruik word deur die toekenning industrie om 'n 'stem' te verleen vir diegene wat nie gehoor of gesien word nie, diegene wat onderdruk word, en om sodoende ontmagtiging en oorheersing te bevraagteken. Ten slotte stel hierdie studie dat in die afwesigheid van

ekonomiese outonomie, Afrika literatuur binne die beperkinge van eksterne invloed en begunstiging sal moet werk.

Acknowledgements

During the course of writing this dissertation, I have met many people who have been very influential to my scholarly work and who have made me realise that writing a PhD dissertation does not have to be a lonely affair. First, I want to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Daniel Roux and Dr. Mathilda Slabbert. Thank you for your invaluable support throughout. Your guidance has helped me to sculpt this study from the moment that it was just an idea on my mind, and I offer my sincere appreciation for the learning opportunities that you provided.

Conversations with other members of the English Department at Stellenbosch University have also helped to guide my research in different ways. I am grateful to conversations held with Prof. Grace Musila, Prof. Annie Gagiano and Prof. Leon de Kock. I also benefited immensely from discussions with Dr. Lynda Spencer, Prof. Harry Garuba and Prof. Okello Ogwang. Thank you for sharing your pearls of wisdom with me during the course of this research.

The English Department reading group seminars also provided an invaluable forum where researchers got the opportunity to share details about our progress and to 'complain' about other social and academic issues encountered along the long road to finishing this research work. For this I am grateful to the organisers of these reading group meetings and to my colleagues and friends: Yunusy Ng'umbi, Marciana Nafula Were, Nick Tembo, Asante Mtenje, Kaigai Kimani and Ernest Patrick Monte. I want to sincerely thank Patrick for reading through my first drafts and offering guidance. Thank you too for sharing your potato formula with me.

My completion of this study could not have been accomplished without the support of my friends in Nairobi. Thank you Assia, Nyambura, Jacky, Kimingichi and Lynda for the phone calls, midnight skype dates and the parties we had whenever our paths crossed. Bless you.

I am grateful to my family – Bernard Kiguru, Tabitha Ruteere, Winnie, Annie, Newton and Symo (RIP). You have always believed in me. Thank you too for the spiritual support.

I hereby acknowledge the funding that was awarded to me by the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences to pursue my doctoral studies full-time at Stellenbosch University.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: A Genre against a Prize

It is the prize, above all else, that defines the artist (English 2005, 21).

Introduction

In early 2010 I had just graduated with a BA degree and was eager to start a career as a full-time writer in Kenya. With my passion for writing and having been a Literature Major student, I submitted several manuscripts for novellas and hundreds of poems to different publishing houses in Nairobi. I did not receive a single reply. So I went to see the publishing managers and they all responded in the same way: "We are not currently publishing any unsolicited manuscripts." I then decided to change my strategy and wrote shorter fiction, sending my short stories to newspaper and magazine editors for possible publication. A few were published in newspapers and in a local journal before the magazine's funds ran out. I was unemployed for a few months before I decided to enrol for an MA in Literature, hoping to improve my skills. Then I stumbled upon a writers' group meeting one Saturday morning at the Goethe Institut in Nairobi. It was the AMKA Space for Women's Creativity[1] and I immediately joined the organisation. AMKA provided a platform for established and upcoming writers to meet and talk about literature. We read and critiqued each other's work every month. The organisation also provided information regarding literary publications, call for submissions and even about available literary awards. One day I acted upon one such call for submissions and sent my short story to an online literary magazine. The story won first prize and my award included the chance to get published as well as an opportunity to attend a free creative writers' workshop.

This workshop provided an opportunity to meet with about ten other aspiring writers and exchange ideas about literary publication and the award industry. The workshop facilitator's major accomplishment was that she had previously been shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) and had also attended several of the CP annual writing workshops. The aspiring writers were guided in creating a literature that would fit into the market demands;

[1] Amka is Kiswahili for 'arise'.

writing stories that would appeal to different literary magazines and prizes. For instance, the stories had to be in English and the length remained between 3,000 and 15,000 words (to fit into the CP and the Commonwealth Prize short story submission guidelines). As a past CP shortlisted writer, the facilitator also guided us in writing stories that represented "African sensibilities."[2] One thing that remains clear in my memory from this workshop is the facilitator explaining to us what a good example of a sentence capturing "African sensibilities" would be: "I don't boil my cabbages twice." This small personal moment ended up provoking larger questions around the ways in which value is imposed on a literary work, questioning the roles played by the award organisation as a major canonising agent.

This dissertation is, therefore, concerned with the institution of the literary prize in Africa with a particular focus on the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, African region (CWSSP). I examine the short stories that have been nominated or won the CP and CWSSP, seeking to explore how these narratives have shaped African writing in the global literary market. The study is informed by the fact that these two prizes provide a window into the major preoccupations of contemporary African authors writing from within the continent as well as from the larger African diaspora. The international literary prize has become a legitimizing agency for African literature, determining literary production and canonisation.

The Caine Prize for African Writing was launched in 1999 (and first awarded in 2000) by Baroness Emma Nicholson in memory of her husband, Sir Michael Caine, former chairman of Booker plc. The submission guidelines state that the short stories must have been published in English or translated into English, and it is only open to African writers where an African writer is defined as "someone who was born in Africa, or who is a national of an African country, or whose parents are African" (Caine Prize, "Rules", n.p). The competition aims to award the best short story to "encourage the growing recognition of the worth of African writing in English […] by bringing it to a wider audience" (Caine Prize, "About", n.p).

The Commonwealth Short Story Competition — founded in 1996 and later renamed the Commonwealth Short Story Prize — was a competition for radio stories until 2011, when the award body started accepting short stories for print publications. This is an annual award for

[2] This phrase was used by the Caine Prize competition to describe the required qualities in an African story but it has since 2012 been removed from the CP submission guidelines at **Error! Main Document Only.**

unpublished stories managed and funded by the Commonwealth Foundation which "seeks to give a voice to previously unknown writers from the Commonwealth regions" in a process which the administrators hope "builds communities of less heard and emerging voices to influence the decision making process which affects their lives" (Commonwealth Writers, "prizes", n.p). The prize awards writers from the Commonwealth regions of Asia, Canada, Africa, Europe, the Pacific and the Caribbean. As in the other regions, an African regional winner is selected each year, together with some commended entries.

Ernest Emenyonu in "Once Upon a Time Begins a Story..." demonstrates the continued significance of the Caine Prize in African literature, arguing that no other contemporary cultural institution has had a greater impact in foregrounding individual African writers at the global literary marketplace (7). This prize has contributed in providing links with publishers, readers and the wider literary market. While Dobrota Pucherová, in "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last: Notes on the Caine Prize", critiques the award as an institution that participates in a "system of postcolonial knowledge industry that both values and marginalizes postcolonial texts", she however acknowledges the contribution of the award in creating a contemporary literary canon (13). The Caine and Commonwealth prizes are both structured on the idea of promoting literature by previously unknown writers and bringing their work to a wider audience on a global level. True to their goal, these prizes have played a major role in moulding writers who have afterwards earned recognition both locally and internationally.

Commemorating a decade since its inception in *Ten Years of the Caine Prize for African Writing* (2009), Jonathan Taylor, Chairman of the Council of the Caine Prize, and Nick Elam, the then Administrator, noted in the Preface that the "winners and shortlisted candidates have seen their careers immeasurably enhanced, typically by attracting the interest of leading literary agents, and having their books published by mainstream publishers, and winning further prizes with them" (6). Indeed, both the Caine and Commonwealth prizes have acted as a platform from where early career writers are inducted into the global literary marketplace. The international framing of these award institutions coupled with the media attention and the economic capital that accompanies the prize winners, has not only foregrounded new literary texts but individual writers too. In a sense, the prize has managed to give these writers an avenue from where they can be read by the world. In an interview, Binyavanga Wainaina, the 2002 Caine Prize winner, talks about how the award shaped his writing career:

> Until I won the Caine prize nobody in Kenya was interested in the fact that I wrote fiction, except my friends. Nobody cared. Of course, being in an ex-colonial country, when you win something from abroad they regard you more. […] It is a shame on our country to get foreign legitimacy before one's work could be appreciated. I would never been able to found *Kwani*? if I hadn't won the Caine prize because I would not be taken serious in Kenya.[3]

Wainaina's comments demonstrate the role of the international literary prizes in influencing cultural and literary production in Africa. As major international awards, the CP and CWSSP have continued to confer not only the monetary value associated with such prizes but also the symbolic and cultural capital that comes with them. During the celebration of ten years of the Caine Prize, in 2009, South African Nobel Laureate JM Coetzee, who also serves as a literary patron for this award institution, noted in a press statement that "the Caine Prize has done a great deal to foster writing in Africa and bring exciting new African writers to the attention of wider audiences."[4]

Like Wainaina, other recipients of the prize have gone ahead to launch successful writing careers after achieving the symbolic and economic value associated with the prize. Wainaina used the prize money to establish, together with a group of other writers, a literary magazine called *Kwani*?[5] The magazine continues to publish new and upcoming writers, providing links with internationally recognised awards and publishing organisations. He has also used this as an avenue to immerse himself further into his writing career, publishing several short stories and most recently his memoir, *One Day I Will Write About This Place* (2011). Helon Habila, the 2001 Caine winner from Nigeria, has since published three novels, *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), *Measuring Time* (2007) and *Oil on Water* (2010), gaining major international recognition. His first novel is an extension of his 2001 winning story, "Love Poems." The novel won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for African Region in 2003. Other examples include Zimbabwean writer Brian Chikwava who won the CP in 2004 for "Seventh Street Alchemy" and later wrote the novel, *Harare North* (2009); and Nigerian Caine nominee and Commonwealth winner Chimamanda Adichie with *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow*

[3] Interview available online at: http://everythinliterature.blogspot.co.za/2010/07/those-who-dont-read-fiction-dont-write.html
[4] Online. Available at: http://www.caineprize.com/pdf/Caine_Prize_10th_Anni.pdf
[5] *Kwani?* is a Kiswahili term which translates to 'so what?' This literary magazine aims to publish new and upcoming writers who initially could not get published through the mainstream literary publishers. *Kwani?* is presented as defiance against the bureaucratic rules and literary values set down by mainstream literary institutions in Kenya and therefore the slogan, 'so what?'

Sun (2006) and *Americanah* (2013). Zimbabwean writer NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Guardian First Book Award in 2013 and won the Etisalat Prize (2013), the Los Angeles Times Book Prize Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction (2013) and the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award (2014). Bulawayo's novel was an expansion of her 2011 CP winning story, "Hitting Budapest." Another writer is South African Mary Watson, who won the 2006 Caine for her short story "Jungfrau", published in her first collection, *Moss* (2004), and has now published *The Cutting Room* (2013) with Penguin.

James English's seminal work on the circulation of cultural value, *The Economy of Prestige* (2005), foregrounds the importance of literary prizes, noting that cultural awards constitute the second-largest category after awards in the sciences. English's general argument postulates that prizes serve the primary function of facilitating cultural market transactions, and he therefore calls for the need to place all materials and symbolic goods, including literature, within an economic bracket. A literary award gives value to a work of literature, promoting the writer and their work in the literary market. English's analysis of literary awards is centred mainly on the Euro-American literary industry, where he notes that the literary market is oversaturated with prizes, leading to prize proliferation – a fact that he notes may negatively influence the value and prestige of awards. On the African literary scene, however, the award industry has not been as vibrant as the Euro-American one, with many of the contemporary awards for Africa established only after the year 2000. Some of the most prestigious of these African literary awards include the Nigeria Prize for Literature sponsored by Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Company in partnership with the Nigerian Academy of Science and the Nigerian Academy of Letters. At the time of researching this dissertation (2015), the award money totalled US$100,000 (£61,000) and was handed to the best literary works from Nigeria, rotating among four genres of fiction: prose, poetry, drama and children's literature. The Etisalat Prize for Literature is funded by the mobile telecommunications service provider, Etisalat, and was established in Nigeria in 2013. It aims at promoting and celebrating first time writers of published books from Africa. The books have to be in English and the winner receives £15,000. The South African *Sunday Times* Barry Ronge Fiction Prize awards R100,000 (£5,200) for a full-length novel, written in (or translated into) English, while the PEN/Studzinski Literary Award rewards the best original short stories in English from the Southern African Development Communities (SADC) region. The PEN awards £5,000 to the winner while the first and second runners-up are

awarded £3,000 and £2,000 respectively. The Caine Prize for African Writing (CP), on the other hand, awards £10,000 to the author of the winning short story while shortlisted writers get £500 each. The winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (CWSSP) receives £5,000, increased in 2013 from the initial £2000. The regional winners of the CWSSP receive £2,500, increased from £500. Economically and symbolically, as the description above demonstrates, the Caine Prize ranks highly as a prestigious award for an African short story. Beyond Africa, it also ranks among the biggest short story awards in terms of the cash prize as well as the number of entries. The economic reward is also supplemented with the earnings generated from marketing the stories. As English contends, therefore, prizes are important tools of enlarging the notion of economics to include systems of non-monetary, cultural, and symbolic transactions (4).

Because of the relevance of the economic value of an award, it is important to note that inasmuch as symbolic value is important to a prize organisation, one cannot underrate the significant role played by the economic or the cash value of an award. English states that:

> Certainly, money plays a role in the world of art and literature – in sponsorship, marketing, philanthropy, and so forth. Prizes obviously are bound up in varying degree with the business end of art, with the actual funding of cultural production and the traffic in cultural products, and no one would question the legitimacy of inquiring into their economic motivations and effects in this restricted sense. (4)

The focus on the economic capital in these prizes is, therefore, not an attempt to reduce culture to a matter of money and economics, but rather an attempt to explore the process through which prizes play a role in placing works of art within an economic market and according value to them. Similarly, the word 'prize' already invokes financial worth or an economic transaction. The etymology of the word 'prize' can be traced back to "the Latin word '*pretium*'" which translates to "'price', 'money'; akin to the Sanskrit *prati*: 'against,' 'in return'" (English 6).

The prestige associated with the Caine and Commonwealth prizes is not, however, only a result of the economic rewards to the winners. One of the major international literary prizes that has historically impacted on the wider publishing scene in Africa was the NOMA Award for Publishing in Africa. This prize was funded by a Japanese philanthropist, Soichi Noma, and ran for 30 years beginning in 1979. It awarded both fiction and non-fiction and, as Cecilia Kimani explains in "Publishing in Africa", the NOMA prize awarded $10,000

annually to African writers and scholars to encourage local publishing. Apart from the NOMA, the other major literary award to influence writing on the continent was the Commonwealth Writers' Prize which ran from 1987 to 2013 and had two categories: the Best Book Prize and the Best First Book Prize. Although the NOMA and the Commonwealth Book prizes played a major role in literary production on the continent, their focus was on awarding already published texts. As revealed later in this study, the reality of economic and political crises in many parts of the continent over different historical periods was reflected in literature through an impoverished publishing infrastructure. Grounding an award on literary publications during that historic period therefore ignored the realities of the literary publishing industry on the continent. The change of prize focus by the Commonwealth Prize in 1996 to include unpublished short stories, therefore, presented an opportunity for the award institution to redefine its influence in the cultural industry. It presented a radical shift in the role of the literary award in Africa. The literary competition became involved in the production as well as the awarding of value. The short story was presented as a transitional genre used by early career writers to gain global visibility in the literary marketplace. The launch of the Caine Prize four years after the Commonwealth Short Story Prize acted to cement the role of the award body as an important institution of literary production and consumption. The Caine and Commonwealth prizes award both published and unpublished works and take part in other book production initiatives such as funding and participating in creative writing programmes, encouraging literary publishing on the continent by providing co-publishing agreements with local institutions as well as providing links with international publishers for winning writers.

Culturally and economically, the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes are the most prestigious literary awards for the contemporary short story in Africa. The prestige of these two major prizes is not only achieved through the financial rewards, but also through their symbolic status in the global cultural and literary field. The Caine and the Commonwealth have greatly contributed to the canonization of contemporary African literature, and in this way made a substantial contribution to sustaining and influencing particular cultural images, both locally and globally.

The scope of this study is therefore defined by the Caine and Commonwealth awards and their influence in the African literary field. The cultural, economic and symbolic prestige of the two prizes has significantly impacted on the development of literature on the continent and the historical and political positioning of the two award organisations has also provided

lenses within which to read contemporary development of African literature from a postcolonial perspective. While the Commonwealth prize is not a specifically African award, the Caine is the only international award exclusively awarded to a single African short story. The two awards are funded, adjudicated and awarded from London and the economic and political backgrounds of these two prizes call for an exploration of how global politics influence contemporary African literature.

My use of the phrases "African writer" and "African literature" in this dissertation is framed within the definitions set forth by these two award bodies. My study is, however, aware of the restricting frame of these definitions and aims to deconstruct the stereotypical presentation of the continent as a homogenous unit through a literary and cultural analysis of the prize-winning stories to demonstrate how individual writers and texts reflect on the continent. This study is also cognisant of the ambiguities that arise in the award body's description of "African sensibilities" in the context of production of literary taste for as Madhu Krishnan (2014) contends, "[l]ike the continent itself, the idea of 'an African sensibility' both alludes to a sense of closure while simultaneously defying any single statement of being or unified interpretation" (146). I argue that this phrase has significantly contributed in the stereotypical representation of the continent as a homogenous unit, with the effects being demonstrated in the prize stories. Indeed, the focus of this thesis is precisely on the ways in which large literary prizes become instrumental in defining an homogenous notion of African Literature. In this sense, I direct myself to an idea of African Literature that is, in fact, produced and solidified by the prizes themselves. In the analysis of these texts, I deploy the concept of postcolonialism as a theoretical tool to uncover the subtexts of prize-winning works; to probe beneath the 'African sensibilities' of the canonised texts, aiming to reveal political, social and cultural assumptions. This dissertation aims to uncover the complexities and contradictions of the homogeneous representation of the continent by the award bodies by paying attention to the context in which the prize-winning texts are produced and marketed in the global literary marketplace.

The short story genre and the literary prize

Judging from the available prizes for contemporary African literature, the most prestigious of these awards are centred on the short story genre. As the history of literary awards in Africa reveals, before the year 2000 the available prizes for African literature were few and lacked

sufficient symbolic and cultural capital to catapult writers into the international prize market. In addition, the major awards for African literature at the time, like the NOMA, the Commonwealth or the Macmillan prizes, were book awards. The launch of the Caine in 2000, a prize that exclusively awarded the short story, therefore played a huge role in not only promoting literature in Africa but specifically endorsing the short story genre. Although the Commonwealth Prize initially recognised and awarded both short stories and novels from all over the Commonwealth regions, the short story took centre stage in 2013 when the book prize was discontinued in favour of the short story award.

By critically analysing the shortlisted as well as the winning stories in the CP and the CWSSP, I seek to establish the literary publishing trends emerging from the continent under the influence of the international prizes. The first few years following the launch of the CP were characterised by stories from well-established African writers, usually ones based in the diaspora. The list included such writers as Nuruddin Farah, Jamal Mahjoub, Mia Cuto, Emmanuel Dongala, Lilia Momple and Abdourahman Waberi. Since 2004, however, the shortlists have mainly included new and upcoming writers based on the continent. The trend in the CWSSP shortlist also demonstrates that more locally based writers are winning the international short story prizes. The shortlists usually comprise of writers who have not previously published a full-length book. Winning the prize then provides an opportunity for the writer to earn contracts with major international publishers from where they move on to write novels. After the Caine, Habila has published three novels while Wainaina has written his memoir, *One Day I Will Write About this Place* (2011). Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's novel, *Dust* (2014) came out ten years after her Caine win. Other examples include Zimbabwean writer Brian Chikwava with his novel *Harare North* (2009), Nigerian Caine nominee and Commonwealth winner Chimamanda Adichie with *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), and Sudan's Leila Abouleila with *Coloured Lights* (2001), *Minaret* (2004) and *Lyrics Alley* (2011) which was Fiction Winner of the Scottish Book Award (2011) and also shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the same year. Epaphras Chukwuenweniwe Osondu, who won the Caine in 2009, has since published two short story anthologies: *Voice of America* (2010) and *This House is Not for Sale* (2015). The other CP winner with an anthology is Segun Afolabi. His collection, *A Life Elsewhere* (2007), illustrates the realities of migrations and immigrations.

The literary trends evident in the prize-winning stories as well as in the post-prize literature, therefore, call for an investigation of the intersectionality between genre and prize in post-

2000 African literature. The available prizes have not only promoted the short story genre but they have impacted on the development of literature on the continent. Awards such as the CP and the CWSSP, I argue, have led the winners to other genres by providing the economic and cultural capital needed for literary production and growth. The short story prize is therefore seen as a launching pad to the global literary scene. I am, however, cognisant of the exceptional case of the 2015 CP shortlist which included a previous winner. Segun Afolabi, the 2005 winner, was shortlisted again ten years later along with two former shortlisted candidates. After gaining the authentication and recognition by the international short story prize, many of the writers usually proceed to novel writing. As demonstrated by the post-prize literature, the short story award provides a testing ground for the budding writer in terms of form, style and theme. Winning writers usually expand the prize stories into novels which are easily selected for publication by major publishers. Examples include NoViolet Bulawayo's winning story that later grew into the novel *We Need New Names* (2013). The novel was a Booker finalist in 2013. Habila's 2002 novel, *Waiting for an Angel*, is also an extension of his CP winning story. This trend seems to point at African writers as consciously using the short story award as a testing ground for literary ideas that could further be expanded into longer works of fiction. In the context of these awards the short story is perceived as a stepping stone to the novel. As I demonstrate later in this dissertation, the study of the short story prize in African literature has led me to analyse the award industry from two different perspectives: as an institution responding to an already established literary culture and also as a producer of literary value on the continent.

Nadine Gordimer, in "The Short Story in Africa", notes that the genre is more malleable and open to experimentations with style, language and form than the novel and this is one of the reasons why it is easily accommodated by different media spaces. Gordimer adds that the short story is "a fragmented and restless form, a matter of hit or miss, and it is perhaps for this reason that it suits modern consciousness – which seems best expressed as flashes of fearful insight alternating with near-hypnotic states of indifference" (170-171). Characteristically, the short story is brief, compact and straight to the point. Theorising on the form of the short story, Edgar Allan Poe as far back as 1842 formulated the significance of brevity in the genre, arguing that one should be able to read a short story in one sitting.

In most parts of the African continent the development of the short story, just like the novel and other genres, has been slow and faced various challenges, the major one has been the historically impoverished publishing industry. However, as I expound later in this

dissertation, South Africa has been exceptional in this regard as the country has heavily invested in the literary sector over different historical periods. The short story genre has particularly benefited from South Africa's long history of literary periodicals such as *Drum*, *Standpunte*, *Purple Renoster*, *Bolt*, *Staffrider*, *Ophir*, *Contrast* and *IZWI/Voice/Stem*. The post-2000 African literary scene has also seen tremendous development in the literary publishing scene, aided by the availability of the digital publishing platform. In his memoir, Wainaina (2011), who is credited with the Caine's decision to accept stories published online, decries the impoverished publishing industry in Africa that fails to accord the short story the same values bestowed upon other genres like the novel. In general, the fact of a weak publishing industry has been blamed for the historical underrepresentation of the short story genre in academic discussions. In a special edition of *African Literature Today* dedicated to the short story in Africa, the editor, Ernest Emenyonu, discusses the critical gap in criticism attending to the African short story. He claims that "national and international conferences and colloquiums continue to be held in Africa and elsewhere to address issues and challenges associated with the novel, poetry, and drama in African literature, with virtually no attention paid to the short story" (1). Habila, who has since his CP win in 2002 edited two anthologies of African short stories, also raises the question of the historical second place position of the short story genre in African literature, a fact he blames on "the disappearance of a middle class in many African countries, a sector historically necessary for the survival of a short-story culture" (Habila, *Granta Book* ix). The growth of this genre on the continent is, therefore, closely linked to the development of the African publishing scene and a discussion of the short story and the publishing industry in Africa has to include the significant roles historically performed by the radio, newspapers, literary magazines and the internet.

For many creative writers on the continent, the BBC radio, especially, has been instrumental in the growth of the genre as well as in popularising the writers at a global level. This has mainly been achieved through the partnership with the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) and the Commonwealth Short Story Competition (1996-2011) which was popularised through BBC radio, an arrangement that saw the former coloniser turned to post-independence cultural producer. The radio provided a media forum where the winning entries were read to the audience in different parts of the world. In the absence of a strong publishing sector, the radio became the major outlet for literary creativity and helped to launch the careers of many African writers, as well as others from the Commonwealth nations. Some contemporary African writers – for instance, Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe,

Jackee Budesta Batanda, Lauri Kubuitsile, Ellen Banda-Aaku, Molara Wood and Taddeo Bwambale Nyodo – have previously had their stories read on the radio. Newspaper and magazines have also greatly contributed to the growth of the genre by regularly publishing short stories and reviews. As I discuss in details in chapter three of this dissertation, the growth of literary journals and magazines on the continent has helped to provide publication opportunities for writers of the short story. From colonial times to the present day literary scene, magazines and other periodicals such as *Drum*, *Transition, Wasafiri, Granta* and *Jalada*, have contributed to increased production of the African short story. Tinashe Mushakavanhu notes in "Locating a Genre":

> Literary magazines are essential and a good one testifies to the literary activity of a place. It is the memory of a particular period and the laboratory of new ideas. It represents a fairer and more balanced means of judging the richness of a national literature. (133)

The internet has also proved a very important tool for foregrounding the short story, especially since this genre, due to its very nature of being brief, is well-adapted to the form of the internet. In a sense, the internet has proved to be more favourable to the short story, and poem, than the novel. My research, coupled with personal experience, found that it is also more cost effective to publish online, especially for new and upcoming writers without economic or symbolic capital. Indeed, Mushakavanhu views the short story as a form that has "been adopted as an economical publishing strategy" (131). In this sense, the short story genre has taken centre stage in African literature mainly as a result of the material conditions for literary production on the continent. I contend that a viable and vibrant literary scene as represented through literary magazines and online publications has proved to be vital in promoting not only the short story but the contemporary African literature in general.

Over the last two decades, one of the major catalysts for the increasing visibility of the African short story has been the launching of several short story awards. Most of these awards are local and based at country or regional block levels across the continent. In Tanzania, there is the Eastern Africa Writers Award established in 1999 and funded by the Institute of Swahili Research, University of Dar es Salaam. This award, however, has been unsystematic in awarding writers, citing lack of funds. The Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa, founded in 2005, has been actively promoting writing from the continent, although it is not limited to the short story genre. It is open to all genres of creative writing from the

continent. In the Southern African region, the PEN Literary award has been on the forefront in promoting short stories from the SADC region.

Since the turn of the millennium, however, the short story has gained in popularity, capturing the attention not only of publishers but of literary scholars as well. This popularity can mainly be attributed to the launch of the Caine Prize for African Writing, and partly to the growing reputation of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. As Emenyonu argues in "Once Upon a Time Begins a Story…", the Caine has "more than any other institution in the 21st century, inspired and enhanced the enthusiasm for the African short story, projecting in the process new and exciting voices in contemporary imaginative creativity in Africa" (7). Through these two major awards, certain writers like Nigeria's Chimamanda Adichie, Kenya's Binyavanga Wainaina and Zimbabwe's NoViolet Bulawayo have been catapulted into international literary circles from where they have moved on to write in the international limelight. This increased public exposure has also boosted the prestige and reach of the African short story and African literature in general. In this way, the short story has continued to foreground different images of Africa at a local as well as at a global level.

Literary awards and canonisation

The literary prize is a major investment for a writer as well as for a publisher because it acts as a consumer's guide to literature. Richard Todd demonstrates in *Consuming Fictions* (1996) how the Booker Prize has positively influenced book sales for winners and for shortlisted writers in the past. Todd notes that winning a prize not only confers prestige on the writer, it also influences the taste of the reading public. Tope Folarin, in an interview with *This is Africa* following his 2013 Caine Prize win, highlighted the significance of the award industry, especially for new and upcoming writers. He said:

> Winning the Caine Prize changed everything. This sounds like a cliché, I know, but in my case it is true. For example, before I won the Caine Prize I was looking for an agent, and I was still struggling to get my work published. The morning after I won the prize I had a number of offers in my inbox, from both agents and publishers. In addition, the Caine expanded my audience dramatically.[6]

[6] Online. Available at: http://thisisafrica.me/africanidentity-in-a-globalised-world/

The award organisation has therefore continued to play an important function in literary canonisation. However, the prize industry is only one of the many institutions of canon formation. Trevor Ross in *The Making of English Literary Canon* (1998) explains that "canons are made and preserved within critical and academic institutions as well as cultural establishments such as public libraries, publishing houses, repertory theatres, and so on" (4-5). In addition, book reviews, book clubs, literary journals and academic policies also act as literary consecrating agencies. As I will demonstrate in chapter two of this dissertation, the publishing industry in Africa is usually dependent on government policies, and literary publishers have learnt to align their work within the requirements of the education system in order to fit within school syllabi. For example, the selection of a literary text by the department of education confers literary value on the work. Literary organisations like the television personality Oprah Winfrey's book club have also significantly influenced literary taste and canonisation. English (2005) writes that the popularity of Winfrey's book club has come near to being "a new kind of book prize" (34). The Oprah Book Club selection has directly influenced book sales, with some selling a million additional copies after gaining the coveted status of the Oprah book of the month (English 35). It is also important to remember that Toni Morrison's sales figures were boosted far more by being selected for the Oprah's Book Club in 2000 than by her 1993 Nobel Prize (Barnard 100). Book reviews by literary scholars and critics, published in forums with international reach, have also played a role in literary consecration. Positive reviews from influential and respected literary critics raise the profile of the writer and the market reception of their work. However, the amount of literary attention that a prestigious prize like the Nobel, the Booker or the Caine draws to a book or to a short story is much more significant than any review could ever achieve.

My study is aware of the conflicting perspectives among literary theorists on the centrality of awards in knowledge production. Major awards like the Nobel or the Booker have generated substantial controversy on their role as authenticating agents. Sandra Ponzanesi, in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry* (2014), echoes the voice of many critics who have condemned the Nobel as a Eurocentric prize "which has been slow to recognise the talents and literary worth of authors from former European colonies, and writing in the language of their former masters" (74). French Marxist Jean-Paul Sartre refused the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature, arguing that writers should not allow themselves to be turned into an institution. He proposed that writers should be wary of who is validating and canonising them. Following his refusal

to accept the Nobel, in an interview with Simone de Beauvoir published in *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre* (1985), Sartre stated that:

> These honours are given by men to other men, and the men who give the honour, whether it's the *Légion d'honneur* or the Nobel Prize, are not qualified to give it. I can't see who has the right to give Kant or Descartes or Goethe a prize which means *now you belong in a classification. We have turned literature into a graduated reality and in that literature you occupy such and such a rank.* I reject the possibility of doing that, and therefore I reject all honours. (qtd. in Carter 35-36)

David Carter, in *How to Win the Nobel Prize in Literature* (2012), emphasises that for Jean-Paul Sartre, "standardization and placement in hierarchical structures (by awarding prizes which recognized achievements of specific values) meant the loss of individual freedom" (33). Namwali Serpell was awarded 2015 Caine Prize and, echoing Sartre, called for the erasure of literary hierarchies that are instituted by the prize competitions. While Sartre refused to accept the Nobel, Namwali received the Caine but decided to distribute the £10,000 cash prize equally among the five shortlisted writers that year. Through this action the Zambian writer who was first shortlisted for the CP in 2010 argued against ranking of writers in the literary market. However, as I expound further in this research, it is the nature of awards to create hierarchies and rankings for literature. In this regard, the next chapter explores the process of acquiring and imposing literary taste on a text by the prize which acts as the legitimizing agent that stamps the mark of quality on a literary work. I argue that the hierarchies in literatures that are established through the prize industry as a canonisation agency also demonstrate the power relations within and as a result of this institution.

Creating a literary and cultural value: theoretical frameworks

Pierre Bourdieu, in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), evaluates the relationship between systems of thought, social institutions and different forms of material and symbolic power. His theory centres on the power relations evident in the field of cultural production. He concludes that systems of domination are present in almost all areas of cultural practice. Both Bourdieu and English note that the process of submission for awards, selection, shortlisting and eventual process of awarding literature is determined mainly by power relations between the systems of cultural production and consumption. An analysis of the

award bodies reveals that the major literary prizes for African literature are administered from Europe, and whether consciously or unconsciously, they are still implicated in the history of colonial domination, a theme which continues to echo in the prize-winning works as well as in the structure of the award institutions.

The history of most literary and cultural prizes in the world reveals that awards were mainly established out of the need to impose cultural patronage by the state and other political leaders; the state expressed the desire to extend bureaucratic control over the unruly fields of art, to enlarge the state's share of the power to produce artistic value – to canonise (English 47). This history exposes the power imbalances between the producers of literary value and the consecrating agencies. An analysis of the institutions of canon formation, therefore, also seeks to uncover the underlying power relations that influence the production and consumption of a cultural product. Robert Thornton, in "Finding Culture", explains that society functions on the constructedness of knowledge and cultural practices. He notes that the institutions that govern cultural production are centred within relations of power, adding that:

> [g]enerally, it is held that this construction takes place within a context of power relations that suppress some kinds of constructions, while elevating others to the status of 'the normal', or the canonical […] Cultural studies, however, holds that these 'texts' are reproduced, sold, taught, institutionalized, or practiced in relation to some system of power that necessarily makes a selection, imposes values and morality, and thus determines their truth or goodness. (35)

My study recognizes that the process of canonization, especially through literary awards, is a structurally oriented one that runs the risk of privileging certain political, social and economic values and identities. I have used Bourdieu's arguments to look at the relationship between the givers and the receivers of these awards. In view of Bourdieu's theorisation, my study recognises the need to focus on the social, economic and cultural environment in literary production, for it exercises significant influence on the literary output in any given society. My analyses of the prize industry, and prize-winning works, therefore, are an attempt to uncover the power relations that define the field of literary and cultural production. To this end, this dissertation explores the position of the international prizes for African literature within the wider literary and cultural production industry.

This study analyses the Caine and Commonwealth awards as institutions of canon formation arguing that they have constructed an economy of value and prestige in contemporary African literature, directly influencing its production as well as consumption in the literary market. The idea of a literary market and literary value must, however, be understood as descending from Marxist perspectives on commodity and value, particularly, the concept of commodity production and the international networks of production.[7] This dissertation, therefore, seeks to position the literary text within the production mechanisms that shape its existence and attendant value. It is framed around the theorisations of Pierre Bourdieu and James English on the intersections of various fields of cultural production and the effects this has on literature.

In the literary marketplace, just as in any other commodity market, the system of production is reflected in the content of the texts. John Guillory (1993) insists on the interrelation between representation and distribution of literature in the process of canon formation, noting that "the problem of what is called canon formation is best understood as a problem in the constitution and distribution of cultural capital, or more specifically, a problem of access to the means of literary production and consumption" (ix). By focusing on cultural capital, Guillory borrows from Pierre Bourdieu's, and by extension, Marxist analysis of society according to class divisions. Bourdieu (1993) defines cultural capital as the "forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions" that one acquires by virtue of being part of a particular social class and which ultimately contributes to the owner's economic and social standing (7). To understand the concept of the canon, this dissertation places literary texts within the frameworks of production. It acknowledges that the selection of a canon represents the distribution of both economic and cultural capital within the society; the capital which, as Bourdieu (1993) explains, is always unevenly distributed, because it circulates within a symbolic economy of cultural value that is configured in a series of interlocking hierarchical structures (42).

Bourdieu notes that the field of cultural production is the field of power and this study engages with this concept in order to deconstruct how power relations within the award sector influences, and is ultimately influenced by, and reflected in, the literature produced. This research examines the culture of literary prestige that mediates the production and dissemination of literatures within the global culture by centring on postcolonial African

[7] See Karl Marx on *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867)

literature and the international literary prize. In this regard, this study benefits immensely from the contribution of James English's theorisation on the role of the prize as a canonising agent. English examines the different politics that influence the production of cultural value. In this study, his perspective has proved important in analysing the award industry as a means of cultural production that has various players at stake. His work focuses on the history of awards and the role of the prize industry in the global economy of cultural prestige. While English's analysis is based on the structure of the award organisation, demonstrating how different economic, cultural and political frameworks have influenced the award sector, my study approaches this field from a literary perspective aiming to uncover the power dynamics that operate between the award sector and the literary text. This study relies on English's seminal work on the place of cultural awards to theorise on the circulation of value both within and outside the literary frameworks aiming to place contemporary African literature within the global cultural and literary market.

My study acknowledges that the production of literature is influenced by its cultural, political and economic contexts and that the literary text also needs to fit within the various socio-political economies. By placing the literary work within the market structures, the text takes the form of a commodity, following on Marx's thoughts on capitalism where a commodity is viewed as a product intended mainly for exchange. This approach to art has its primary concern with "the whole intermediary space which is the material apparatuses of cultural production, all the way from theatres and printing presses to literary coteries and institutions of patronage, from rehearsing and reviewing to the social context of producers and recipients" (Eagleton, "Introduction",13). It calls for a historical understanding of the constitution of the canon by shedding light on the modes of production.

However, I am aware of the fact that theorists such as Marx, Bourdieu and English attend primarily to the European and America cultural scene. In this regard, I further interact with the ideas of several other postcolonial literary and cultural scholars whose research touches on cultural production including Sarah Brouillette (2007), Graham Huggan (2001), Sandra Ponzanesi (2014) and Neil Lazarus (2011). Furthermore, I draw on the views of critics such as Dobrota Pucherová (2011), John Guillory (1993), Clare Squires (2004) and Richard Todd (1996) to debate on the significance of literary prizes in the canon formation industry.

The CP director, Lizzy Attree, writes in praise of the British-based award, applauding it for its contribution "to encourag[ing] the growing recognition of the worth of African writing in

English" (36). Attree, in "The Caine Prize and Contemporary African Writing", assesses the development of this prize in the African literary scene and attempts to address various issues that have been raised about the prize such as language exclusion, the focus on diaspora-based writers and the spectacle of pain in prize-winning short stories. On the other hand, Samantha Pinto notes that African writers have learned to view the CP as a double-edged gift "pursued in the face of minimal continental support for African writing" (141). Writing in "The Caine Prize and the Impossibility of 'New' African Writing", she adds that the CP lies at the "uncomfortable crossroads of the temporal 'modalities' of colonial aesthetics and anthropology" and its own critical reception should be viewed "as proof of old injustices" (142). Doreen Strauhs's comprehensive work on literary organisations on the continent in *African Literary NGOs* (2013) discusses the contribution of the Caine and Commonwealth literary prizes to writing organisations such as FEMRITE in Uganda and *Kwani*? in Kenya. She explores how these international literary awards influence, and are influenced by, the local literary institutions.

Although not focused on the Caine and Commonwealth prizes, South African writer Zoë Wicomb (2015 CP Chair of Judges) questions the legitimacy of literary prizes in a country and continent characterized by social, economic and political inequalities. In "Culture Beyond Colour? A South African Dilemma", Wicomb observes that the function of a literary prize in a society faced with different levels of inequality, especially in the education sector is not only "inappropriate or inadequate as a means of encouraging writing, but it actively perpetuates inequity by rewarding those who have been privileged"(28). As Gillian Roberts (2011) notes in the context of the Canadian literary award industry, therefore, prizes do not merely reflect and celebrate literature, "they are entities unto themselves, carrying as many cultural implications as the works they celebrate, and forming a cultural frame in which the works are consumed and read" (51). The award industry, therefore, cannot be examined outside of the cultural, political and economic markets that frame it.

Sandra Ponzanesi in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies* (2014) discusses the CP in the context of postcolonial cultural industry and notes, correctly, that most of the prestigious literary prizes for Africa "are largely Western based and dependent on a system of value judgments in which African aesthetics is often sociologically marked and rests on the anthropological notions of exoticism and 'African sensibilities'" (104). Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2012) and Akin Adesokan in *Postcolonial Artists and Global Aesthetics* (2012) present the African writer as primarily engaged in writing with the

Western reader as the primary audience. Huggan argues that postcolonial literature is produced and marketed mainly for Western consumption while Adesokan postulates that African writers are influenced more by the demand of the Western market than by the realities on the ground. While acknowledging the influence of the Western metropolises in cultural production and consumption, this study calls for a reading of the prize-winning literature as addressed primarily to the self. By analyzing the literary print cultures as well as the digital platforms in African literary production, I align my argument with Evan Mwangi (2009) who contends that African literature should not be read exclusively as writing back to the empire but as writing to the self in order to address different realities on the continent.

One of the earliest academic papers on the role of the CP in Africa's literary and cultural industry, by Dobrota Pucherová, also condemns the prize for perpetuating a stereotypical image of Africa as a place of pain and suffering. Pucherová notes that "many Caine finalists seem to reproduce such stereotypes, in complicity with the spectacularization of African poverty and pain in western media, such as images of hungry, snot-nosed children covered with dust, amputated limbs, the killing of dogs for food, piles of dead human bodies, death as a result of miscarriage or AIDS" (20). She concludes that by focusing on such images of the continent "the Caine Prize markets certain authors as authentic representatives of something called "Africa", providing authentic access to the "African experience" (14). Pucherová's arguments build on Graham Huggan's analysis in *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001), Sarah Brouillette's in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) and Timothy Brennan's in *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997). Huggan is of the opinion that postcolonial writers participate in their own marginalisation by allowing themselves to be defined by international literary institutions like publishers and award organisations. He states that in the desperate search for publications and awards, postcolonial writers are involved in the process of presenting their literature as an exotic commodity for foreign consumption. Huggan's criticism reduces the African writer to a literary marionette entirely dependent on a foreign audience that is only interested in what is painful and gory about the continent. Brouillette's work challenges the arguments put forth by Huggan by introducing the concept of "postcolonial authorial self-consciousness" (7). She looks at contemporary postcolonial literature as a body of work that involves different literary strategies shared between the reader and the author aiming to place a work of art at a vantage position in the global literary scene.

By expanding on the ideas of Huggan and Brouillette regarding the exotic gaze, I explore how contemporary African literature acquires value through the international literary award. I state that the award sector has created a platform for the foregrounding of a particular kind of literature whose value is measured in the aesthetics of suffering. However, I argue for a recuperation of agency by African writers inhabiting the codes that have been labelled marginal and exotic. Chapters five and six in this dissertation dwell on the process through which contemporary writers embrace the stereotypical images of Africa in order to deconstruct the codes of power and domination in the field of literary and cultural production. The study further explores other strategies employed by the writers including the deliberate use of ambiguity in descriptions of the socio-political realities on the continent in order to produce a literature that is uncoloured by narratives of pain and suffering. It is such strategies employed by postcolonial prize-winning writers that guide this dissertation. I rely on Brouillette's postulations that exoticism is not a quality inherent in African or postcolonial literatures; it is a quality that is imposed on a work. I do this by analysing the process through which a text becomes a commodity that relies on the prize to fit into the market demands. While major critics present contemporary African writing as a literature dependent on a foreign Euro-American audience, my primary preoccupation in this dissertation is to deconstruct this theorisation, arguing that the international award for African writing has provided a space for African writers to contest the power relations evident in the culture industry. Contrary to Huggan's view that postcolonial writers participate in the marketing of their own marginality by allowing themselves to be defined by international and global literary institutions, this dissertation focuses on how these writers invert this "marginalisation" or the stereotypical label of the "exotic other" (Huggan 2001) and use the label to access the global market arena from where they contest the power imbalances evident in the cultural production sector.

Huggan postulates that postcolonial writers participate in their own marginalisation by presenting their literature to a foreign audience as an exotic commodity. However, my study explores the different processes through which African literature, mediated through the international award, participates in the global cultural market as the literature of the Other. I explore the ways in which local writers are participating in creating alternative literary cultures aiming to escape the economic and political patronage that has continued to characterise the international prize industry for African literature.

I have also relied on theorisations around the centrality of the Booker Prize in the global cultural industry. This reliance is prompted, in part, by the historical and economic relationship between the Caine, the Commonwealth and the Booker prizes. The Caine, informally referred to as the African Booker, continues to benefit from the cultural and economic capital of the Booker, an institution viewed largely as a Commonwealth award.[8] Luke Strongman's *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* (2002) demonstrates that the prize represents a British Commonwealth notion of literary response following the fall of the empire, while Richard's Todd's *Consuming Fictions* (1996) helps to contextualise literature within the market economy, demonstrating the influence of the Booker on literary consumption. Sharon Norris looks at the Booker Prize from a perspective informed by Bourdieu, arguing that it helps to shed "light on the underlying nature of this award, and on the social, political and economic factors that have helped to shape it" (139). My research has also benefited from David Carter's work on the Nobel Prize in *How to Win the Nobel Prize in Literature* (2012). The book offers a light-hearted view of the strategies employed to win the prestigious prize.

As a member of several African literary organisations, I have noted that the topic of the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes' contribution to the continent's cultural and literary production is always emphasised in both formal and informal discussions. For instance, literary organisations maintain a direct link with these international award bodies through the annual story submissions to both prizes, partnership with the prize institutions in holding creative writers' workshops, and also through the media. The discussion of the role of these prizes, especially the CP, has continued to be a trending subject in newspapers as well as in the social media and blogosphere. Shortlists for the two prizes are usually published online, making them easily available to readers. Online publications have been particularly well-received, with the short stories making headlines in the social media space, especially after the announcement of the annual shortlists. The listed stories become popular topics in newspaper columns and on social media forums such as Twitter, Facebook and blog sites, in anticipation of the winning announcements.

The media attention accorded to the writers has contributed greatly in raising their profiles, particularly in their home countries. Newspaper and magazine reporters and analysts on the

[8] The Booker Prize is open only to writers from Britain and the Commonwealth Nations with a few exceptions to include citizens of the Irish Republic, Pakistan, Bangladesh and America (See Richard Todd, *Consuming Fictions* 77).

topic of international prizes for African literature are usually the prize judges and writers who have previously won and been canonised through such prizes. The newspaper articles on the award industry usually range from the celebration of the prize organisations and winners to questioning the role of an international award in authenticating African writers. Some of the vocal writers include past Caine and Commonwealth winners Habila, Wainaina and Adichie who accuse such prizes of literary and economic patronage on African literature. Writing in *The Guardian,* Habila (2013) notes that the Caine Prize's winning stories emphasise on familiar themes of war, disease and death in what he terms as the "Caine aesthetics of suffering."[9] Wainaina (2014), on the other hand, calls upon African writers and critics to stop giving legitimacy to the Caine because "it just isn't our institution."[10] According to Wainaina, who has played key roles in establishing local literary organisations, magazines, and prizes, the CP has acquired too much of undeserved power as a canonising agent for African literature at the expense of local writers and publishers. He echoes Adichie (2013) who maintains that African writers and scholars need to invest in their own institutions of canon formation to avoid the patronage from former colonial nations.[11] Kenyan poet Stephen Derwent Partington adds that the UK-based Caine Prize, even when overseen by cosmopolitan African writers such as Ben Okri, "seems to be legitimising the rather hackneyed claim that 'the African cultural aesthetic' is exclusively one that states messages-and-morals about social issues, with no interest in entertainment."[12] The same views have been raised by Nigerian critic Ikhide R. Ikheloa who contends that the CP is a prestigious literary prize but it has also encouraged the production of a literature that views Africa through a very narrow prism – that it only awards short stories that further stereotypes of Africa. Ikheloa also blames the writers who are now "skewing their written perspectives to fit what they imagine will sell to the West and the judges of the Caine Prize."[13] His arguments calls to mind my involvement in the creative writing workshop in which the writers consciously created a literature that sought to evoke stereotypical images of Africa – in this case, by fabricating a proverb that emphasises the centrality of food and need.

Looking at the trends arising from the prize-winning stories, I pose these questions: do the prizes exercise an influence on the stories that these writers present? How are the prizes

[9] Online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/20/need-new-names-bulawayo-review
[10] Online. Available at: http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/must-stop-giving-legitimacy-caine-prize-binyavanga/
[11] Online. Available at: http://bostonreview.net/fiction/varieties-blackness
[12] Online. Available at: http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/+More+responsibilities+than+bonuses+for+the+African+writer/-/434746/1413338/-/item/0/-/kwvq9o/-/index.html
[13] Online. Available at: http://xokigbo.com/2012/03/11/the-2011-caine-prize-how-not-to-write-about-africa/

influenced by the literary environment of the stories' production? Who are the main players in the production of literary value that is mediated through the prize industry? English states that the prize frenzy has made prizes become the producers of value instead of the value in the literary works attracting the prize for its quality. He contends that literary and cultural value is always politicised. Based on this insight, my dissertation therefore delves into the political, economic and cultural environments of the stories' production to uncover the process of value creation in the prize industry. I further investigate the prize politics that influence the production and distribution of these cultural values within the local and the global market.

Thesis overview

I have divided my dissertation into seven chapters, the first of which provides an introduction to the international literary award industry before focusing on the African award scene in particular. The chapter further explores the significant role played by the international literary awards on the continent, exploring how the prestige of an award influences the market value of the prize-winners and their literature. It also introduces the function of the Caine and Commonwealth short story prizes as major award institutions for contemporary African literature. As the nature of these awards dictate, the chapter further discusses the position of the contemporary short story genre in Africa.

Chapter two is titled "Literary Awards and the Quest for Taste" and it focuses on postcolonial literary prizes within the study of culture and literature. It further traces the history of the CP and CWSSP to place them within the field of postcolonial literary studies. In this perspective, the chapter investigates the prize industry as a point of convergence for publishers, writers, marketers, and readers, and explores the influence of language, geography, and other socio-political and economic environments that determine literary taste in the process of canonisation. It includes an investigation of the position of the judging panel, the role of the media, the academia as well as the wider publishing scene. The chapter is framed within Immanuel Kant's theorisation on the subjective nature of 'taste' in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790) and Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). The chapter also relies on Bourdieu's ideas of the different types of capital that influence cultural and literary production. In this regard, I look at symbolic, cultural and economic capitals and

how the prestigious international prizes have provided an opportunity for writers to engage in "capital intraconversion" in the process of creating a literary taste (Mack 2010).

My research is mainly involved with the Caine and Commonwealth prizes, investigating how they influence literary growth in Africa. Chapter three, titled "African Print Cultures and the Award Industry", dwells on print cultures on the continent and their contribution to the global cultural production mechanism. The chapter identifies the links between investments in the publishing industry and its reflection in the award sector. It engages with older as well as new literary establishments on the African literary scene to demonstrate how they influence, as well as reflect, the award industry. In the discussions expounded in this chapter, I gain immensely from the history of earlier literary institutions in Africa including literary journals and magazines such as *Drum*, *Transition*, and *Black Orpheus.* In this regard, I have relied on the works of Peter Benson (1986) and Peter D. McDonald (2009). Contemporary literary organisations like *Kwani*?, FEMRITE, *Chimurenga*, *Farafina* and *Storymoja* have demonstrated a more direct link to prizes such as the CP or the CWSSP. Doreen Strauhs' *African Literary NGOs* (2013) has provided an insightful look at the place of contemporary literary organisations which she refers to as Literary Non-Governmental Organisations (LINGOs). My major intention in this chapter is to explore the influence of economic and political dependence in postcolonial literary productions and how this dependence and patronage is reflected in the award sector.

While chapter three exposes the influence of dependence and patronage in literary production, chapter four in this dissertation seeks to explore the different ways in which postcolonial prize-winning writers navigate and negotiate the international literary prize in literary production. The chapter, which borrows its title from Brouillette's and Habila's 'aesthetics of suffering', is a demonstration of how postcolonial African writers have learnt to work within frameworks of patronage. The major focus of this chapter is the significance of the stories of pain and suffering that are continually foregrounded through the CP and the CWSSP. This section of the dissertation is influenced by the works of Huggan and Brouillette as they appraise the logic of exoticism created through the commodification of difference and foregrounded through the many prize-winning stories that focus on violent and painful realities in Africa such as civil wars, hunger and disease. I focus on pain and suffering as a literary currency consciously employed by contemporary African writers to gain symbolic and economic capital in the global literary arena that remains preoccupied with the exotic in postcolonial literature. My key argument here is that the international prize industry for

African literature has provided a space for African writers to engage with the questions of representation, challenging the power structures evident within different institutions of canon formation. It argues that prize-winning writers from the Caine and Commonwealth prizes are engaged in strategic exoticism or authorial self-consciousness – a concept introduced and foregrounded by Huggan and Brouillette, respectively.

The focus on exoticism in prize-winning short stories extends into the next two chapters which recognise the importance of the marginal spaces in literary production. In chapters five and six, I anchor my argument in the theorisation of Gayatri Spivak (1990) and bell hooks (1990) who foreground the importance of marginality as a significant site from where to deconstruct the power structures that exist in literary and cultural production. Marginality becomes a sight of resistance to domination, and these chapters look at various ways in which prize-winning short stories engage with the concept of marginality in theme, style and form. My argument is that these prize authors are writing about, and within, marginalised categories of representation in an effort to subvert these codes of marginalisation. Chapter six further seeks to explore the different ways through which contemporary African writers are engaged in the process of de-exoticisation through the recent increase in the levels of investments in local institutions of cultural production which eventually feeds into the international literary prize industry. I argue for the need to invest in alternative literary structures in order to escape economic and political patronage in literary productions on the continent.

Chapter seven of this dissertation offers a conclusion to my research project. It provides an overarching reflection on the concept of literary prizes, with a focus on the place of the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes, as expounded in the various chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

Literary Awards and the Quest for Taste

Introduction

Prizes are, for the writer, a sign of collective recognition in the literary field. The literary prize also acts as a consumer's guide to literature and, as James English (2005) argues, awards are "the single best instrument for negotiating transactions between cultural and economic, cultural and social, or cultural and political capital" (10). The award body, therefore, becomes an institution that confers a mark of excellence on a literary text and in the process, it influences not only the consumption of literature but its production as well. Writers compete for that stamp of approval and acknowledgement that prizes bring. In this way, the award industry becomes an important agent of literary canonisation. In this regard, this chapter explores the significant role played by international literary awards in African literature canon formation. It focuses on the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, African Region (CWSSP) and the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) as the main literary awards for the African short story, aiming to position these prize competitions in the context of African literary cultural production. The chapter further foregrounds the intricate relationship between the prize competitions, language, publishers, writers and the politics of place to point at the different roles each component plays in cultural production and, ultimately, in the management of literary taste. It argues that canonicity through the award sector is influenced by several factors from the point of production to the presentation of the literary award. I use the word "taste" to refer to the aesthetic qualities of a text as prescribed by the literary award. The chapter then explores the process of this judgement of the aesthetic qualities of the prize texts, exploring factors such as economic and political patronage and its effects in literary taste creation. It concludes that taste in literary production, mediated through the institution of the award industry, is significantly influenced by the economic, political and cultural contexts of production.

Literary taste and cultural value

Dobrota Pucherová acknowledges that "literary judgement can never reflect the taste of all, since there are no universally recognizable artistic qualities" (16). Indeed as Immanuel Kant noted in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790), the judgment of taste is essentially subjective and yet it claims universal validity. In the literary award scene the judging of the aesthetic quality of a text aims to claim a universal appeal and validity. The judgment of the prizewinning stories, therefore, foregrounds the debate on the management of literary taste. It raises the questions of "whose taste?" and "why?" Pierre Bourdieu expands on Kant's theorisation of the judgement of taste by framing it within a social context. "Habitus", Bourdieu explains in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), is the generator of taste. He defines habitus as a "structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices" (170). The concept of habitus is weaved within the social structures of a specific field. The taste of literary a text is thereby dependent on the text's intricate relationship with the social, political and economic environment of its production. The value accorded to the literary work by a prize institution, therefore, is hinged on the taste of that particular award body while the taste of the award is influence by several factors including the judging panel, the funding body and the political environment of its production, among others. The taste and prestige of a prize institution is also determined by the many rules and regulations that govern it. English (2005) sums up these constraints by noting that the "pattern here, which can be generalised to most awards that are organised as open competitions, is that about 98 percent of all submissions are removed from contention by what is in effect the administering organization or institution itself […] through an essentially internal screening process" (136-137).

The process of taste management affirms English's (2005) sentiments that the production of cultural value in any kind of setting is not always just a social process, but that it is also always politicised and leaning towards the prevailing social power (27). This view is echoed by Arnold Krupat in "Native American Literature and the Canon" (1983) who observes that "[t]he canon, like all cultural production, is never an innocent selection of the best that has been thought and said; rather, it is the institutionalization of those particular verbal artefacts that appear best to convey and sustain the dominant social order" (146). The prize industry is, therefore, a delicate and craftily created institution which has various factors functioning together to influence literary taste.

Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) affirms that prestige in a literary prize is not only associated with the economic capital but the cultural and symbolic value too. A literary award does not only confer the cash reward on the winning writer, it is also engaged in the exchange of cultural and symbolic capital. The interplay between symbolic capital, cultural capital and economic capital in the production of literary culture directly influences the production of a literary taste. Randal Johnson, in the introduction to Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), defines symbolic capital as the "degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition", while cultural capital "concerns forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions" (7). James English and John Frow in "Literary Authorship and Celebrity Culture" explain that "symbolic power is determined by the relative strength or value of all the different kinds of currency that participants bring to a cultural transaction: the currency of academic credentials, political office, religious rank, a jail record; or of bestseller status, good reviews, honors and awards, social connections, street cred, physical attractiveness or photogeneity" (55). In this sense, capital is used to "designate anything that registers as an asset, and can be put profitably to work, in one or another domain of human endeavor" (English 9). I argue that the interchange of different types of capital contributes to the generation of literary taste, which in this case, is mediated through the institution of the literary award. In general the interaction between the symbolic, cultural and economic capital in the literary field contributes to influencing the production and consumption of culture presented through literary prizes and other institutions of canon formation. However, as Bourdieu notes, "just as economic wealth cannot function as capital until it is linked to an economic apparatus, so cultural competence in its various forms cannot be constituted as cultural capital until it is inserted into the objective relations between the system of economic production and the system producing the producers" (Bourdieu *Outline*, 186). In this regard, for a prize to gain prestige and recognition, it has to create a balance between economic capital and the symbolic and cultural value associated with it.

A prize's political, social and economic capital affects the content of the shortlisted and winning literature. For instance, as Sandra Ponzanesi in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies* (2014) argues, the trend in the Nobel Prize in Literature over the years has foregrounded the fact that the prize is not only biased towards Scandinavian writers but that it mostly awards political dissidents when presented to postcolonial writers. Indeed, the history of Nobel Prize winners, especially those from non-European countries shows a

conscious effort by the Swedish Academy to award writers whose political views conflict with those of their oppressive country's regime. It includes writers like Wole Soyinka (1986) for his criticism of the Nigerian government especially during the Biafran civil war of 1967–1970 and Nadine Gordimer (1991) for her fight against the South African apartheid system. However, awarding only authors whose work demonstrates a fight against political oppression negatively presents postcolonial literature, as described by Fredric Jameson in "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism", as being only national allegories (69). As Ponzanesi (2014) further argues, the awarding of this "activist" literature from postcolonial nations "assumes that Third World literature is more realistic and less sophisticated in its representational strategies as it always accounts for a position of embattlement" (52). The choice of winning literature reveals the significance of the interaction between the symbolic, cultural and economic capital in the literary field, demonstrating how capital interaction contributes to influencing the production as well as the consumption of literary culture presented through prizes and other institutions of cultural production.

Cultural and symbolic capital is particularly important in the field of literary production, and may be converted to economic capital and vice versa. As Johnson further illustrates, symbolic and cultural aspects of social life are "inseparably intertwined with the material conditions of existence, without one being reducible to the other" (4). The process that allows one type of capital to be exchanged for another is what Edward Mack, in *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature* (2010), refers to as "capital intraconversion" which is "a process through which the value, or symbolic capital, accumulated in the literary field could be exchanged for other forms of capital, whether economic, social or political" (5).

Prize winning writers have been able to convert the economic and symbolic capital accumulated through literary awards into cultural capital and vice versa. For example, Arundhati Roy, who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), is one of the award winning writers who have managed to convert the symbolic capital earned from the Booker into cultural capital which has given her the authority to comment on several social, political and economic issues affecting not only her country, India, but the world at large. Since her Booker win, Roy has become a "writer-activist" (Adesokan *Postcolonial Artists*, 156) who has mainly turned to non-fiction to comment on the environment, human rights, power and domination. As a 'writer-activist' her subjects have been wide-ranging, covering such areas as "dam projects, the nuclear bomb,

corporate globalization, the entrenched demon of communal Hindu fascism in India, the U.S.-spearheaded War on Terror, Islamic Fundamentalism, and postcolonial nations' squandering of the gains of the Non-Aligned Movement" (Adesokan *Postcolonial Artists*, 158). The financial capital from the Booker award and the royalties from her novel which "went on to sell six million copies" allowed her freedom to write beyond the literary borders. For instance, since her Booker win, Roy has published several non-creative works including: *The Cost of Living* (1999); *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001); *An Ordinary Person's Guide to the Empire* (2004); *The Checkbook and Cruise Missile* (2004); *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (2004); *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (2009) and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014), among others.

The symbolic and cultural capital acquired from the cultural field has also afforded her power to comment on the legitimacy of awards in general. After the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi, Roy, in a TV interview, called for the need to look at the prize as a political game given to serve certain political interests. Although not devaluing the contribution of the 17-year-old Yousafzai towards peace and empowerment, Roy argued that Yousafzai was being used as a pawn in a game of global politics adding that "I don't think this world of prizes and awards is an innocent world. It is loaded and it's precious to suggest it's not."[14] Awards in literature and other fields serve different purposes to the awarding organisations as well as to the winners. Roy has used her Booker Prize as a platform to champion for the rights of those disadvantaged by capitalism, especially in her home country, India.

Other notable winners who have managed to convert the economic and symbolic capital earned from their awards include former CP winner Binyavanga Wainaina. The Kenyan author won the Caine in 2002 for the short story "Discovering Home" and converted the different types of capital accrued from the international prize to establish the East African literary organisation, *Kwani*?. Furthermore, the award has afforded Wainaina with the authority to comment on different social and political issues currently affecting the African continent, from sexual orientation and discrimination to representations and misrepresentations of Africa in the literary and political fields.[15] Despite the fact that he was initially canonised by the Caine Prize, Wainaina has been especially vocal in his dismissal of

[14] Online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/23/arundhati-roy-interview-goddess-of-big-ideas.
See also: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMeqYjTJFQs
[15] See Binyavanga Wainaina's "How To Write About Africa" in *Granta 92*. 2005.

literary prizes managed and awarded from and by the former colonial powers. Towards this end, he has been instrumental in establishing and foregrounding local literary organisations, magazines, journals and awards that perform the duties of consecrating value on contemporary African literature, a topic I explore in detail in the next chapters. Wainaina calls for the need to provide alternative literary structures for writers in order to counter the material and symbolic capital that foreign legitimating bodies possess. Following his Caine win and his subsequent essays on leadership and democracy, Wainaina was nominated in 2007 for the World Economic Forum as a "Young Global Leader" – an award which he declined. The Young Global Leader award recognises young leaders from around the world for their professional accomplishments, commitment to society and potential to contribute to shaping the future of the world.[16] The refusal to accept this cultural prize not only demonstrates Wainaina's uneasiness with foreign legitimating bodies, it also demonstrates the power of the Caine in conferring value, or universalising taste, not only on a literary piece but to an individual too.

The publicity these prizes bring has prompted writers (and publishers) to groom works that would fit the Caine or the Commonwealth prize requirements. For instance, the Short Story Day Africa (SSDA) has an annual short story competition where the prize includes not only a cash reward of R2,000 (£100) but also the promise of publication and thereafter a CP submission for the winning stories. In the same vein, each year the CP institution organises a writing workshop that brings together the previous year's long-listed writers at a ten-day event where authors meet to brainstorm and exchange ideas on writing and publishing. At these workshops, usually piloted by renowned African writers like Véronique Tadjo, Aminatta Forna, Jamal Mahjoub, among others, each writer is expected to come up with a story which is in turn published in an anthology along with that year's shortlisted stories. Furthermore, these 'workshop' stories are then submitted for the coming year's CP. For instance, Kenyan writer Muthoni's Garland's "Tracking the Scent of my Mother", which was shortlisted for the Caine in 2006, was written during the 2005 CP workshop and initially published in the CP anthology *Seventh Street Alchemy* (2005).

While this creative process has helped many writers to get published, and gained them a wider readership, it has also meant that gradually, the international prizes have filtered through to the production level. Seen from this perspective, as the Caine Prize Administrator

[16] See: http://www.weforum.org/communities/forum-young-global-leaders

Lizzy Attree acknowledges (2013), the award body "can be said to be helping to produce as well as evaluate contemporary African writing" (39), affirming Brouillette's (2007) argument that contemporary writing is regulated by the market more than ever before (67). Consequently, the award becomes the producer of value rather than the value of the creative product attracting the prize only for its quality. In such a case, the prize institution becomes involved in a selective bestowment of acknowledgement and recognition to particular texts which then occupy prestigious positions in literary circles.

Business sponsorship in literature: economic dependency and literary taste

Economic sponsorship on literature through the award sector has played a significant role in producing cultural value and literary taste. Sharon Norris notes in "The Booker Prize", that the major "justification offered for business sponsorship is that it affords beneficiaries financial security" (152). This is evident through such prizes as the Nobel, the NLNG, the Booker, Caine and Commonwealth prizes. The Nobel Prize in Literature, one of the most prestigious awards in the world, is also one of the oldest prizes for literature – established in 1901. The Nobel's prestige accrues from both its symbolic value as well as its cash prize. The winner receives about US$1,100,000 (£671,000) as well as the publicity that is usually followed with increased sales from the winners' works. Alfred Nobel, the founder of the prize, wanted to give the winning writers financial independence so that they could commit their entire time to the art of writing. This award is prestigious both economically and symbolically because it affords winners a level of financial independence so that they can devote themselves entirely to their work. A majority of other literary awards also aim at giving writers the financial aid they need to be able to dedicate their time to writing. However, most new and non-established writers, especially from the developing world, face the difficult choice of working for a living (often in other fields) and writing. There are very few writers who earn exclusively from their writing careers. Habila, who came to the international literary field through the CP, started as a lecturer and a journalist in his home country, Nigeria, before winning the prize. He still teaches creative writing in addition to being a writer. Ugandan Jackee Budesta Batanda is a journalist, as was Moroccan writer Laila Lalami, who is currently professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside. Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor (Caine 2003) is a screenwriter and was the Executive Director of the Zanzibar International Film Festival.

Nana Wilson-Tagoe, who has judged several literary prizes including the Commonwealth and the Caine prizes, argues that"[i]n Africa, where full-time writing careers may appear like self-indulgent luxuries amidst the pressures and constraints of day-to-day living, a literary award does not only validate the creative enterprise itself but literally buys a prize-winner space and time to focus more fully on the business of writing" (58). Her view is echoed by the Deputy Chair of the Council of the Caine Prize, Ellah Allfrey, in an article titled, "All Hail the African Renaissance" where she says that the CP "has allowed a generation of writers to blossom — not least by granting access to what can sometimes be a closed industry and, importantly, by awarding a decent sum of money with which to buy time to write."[17] The £5,000 or the £10,000 offered by the Commonwealth and the Caine respectively may not be viewed as a handsome sum but it has helped to supplement some writers, at least for a while. In Wainaina's memoir, he gives an account of his financial woes just before he won the Caine in 2002. He had been unemployed for a long time; the part-time job he had been earning a living from (he was paid $100 a month) had just ended. Receiving £10,000 therefore literally aided him in becoming more devoted to his writing career.

The complex relationship between the writer and the prize organisation also involves the role of publishers in sponsoring literary prizes. This is a pointer to the economic importance of prizes that not only benefits the writer but the publisher as well. As Wilson-Tagoe in "Literary Prizes and the Creation of Literary Culture" says, "[p]ublishers may be philanthropic but they are not charities"(59). Although they contribute a great deal in funding different prizes, the symbolic and cultural value that comes with this cannot be underestimated. So if African publishers do not participate in the production of these prizes, it will mean that these publishers, and the regions they represent, continue to play an insignificant role in the production of literary cultural value. Consequently, they continue to miss out on the economic as well as the symbolic capital that is associated with these prizes.

However, although a significant number of awards are created mainly to help writers achieve financial independence, this is not usually the case. The financial worth associated with some of the awards, especially local and national-based awards, is hardly ever enough to guarantee a writer the financial freedom they so greatly yearn for. However, it is worth noting that although there are prizes that carry low or no monetary value, the cultural and symbolic value associated with these prizes is sometimes significant enough, and writers have learnt to

[17] Online. Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8749890/All-Hail-the-African-Renaissance-The-Storymoja-Hay-Festival-with-the-British-Council-in-Nairobi.html

exploit this value and convert it to economic capital. The Commonwealth book and short story awards, for instance, fall under this category where the economic value is far less than the symbolic value associated with the prize. The Commonwealth Book Prize (1987-2013) awarded the regional winner £1,000 while the overall winner received £10,000. Until 2013, the Commonwealth Short Story Prize awarded £500 to the regional winner and £2,000 to the overall winner. After 2013, the short story prize awards £1,000 to the regional winner and £5,000 to the overall winner. The Booker awards £50,000 to the best book while the Caine awards £10,000 to the best short story. Compared to other prizes which cover the same geographical regions such as the Booker or the Caine, the Commonwealth prizes rank the lowest in terms of financial rewards. However, despite the low economic capital associated with the Commonwealth Prize, it still has a high symbolic and cultural capital. Before the Commonwealth Book Prize was discontinued, it remained the first qualifying agent for new writers from the Commonwealth territories. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie won the Commonwealth Best First Book in 2005 for *Purple Hibiscus.* In the same year the novel was long listed for the Booker Prize as well as the Orange Prize. Adichie later received the Orange Prize for her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* in 2007 and the National Book Critics Circle Award (Fiction) for the novel *Americanah* in 2013 (also shortlisted for the 2014 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction). The Commonwealth Best First Book award also played a significant role in canonising other major writers including Uwem Akpan in 2009 for *Say You're One of Them*; Helon Habila in 2003 for *Waiting for an Angel*; M.G. Vasanji in 1990 for *The Gunny Sack* and Zadie Smith for *White Teeth* in 2001.

Postcolonial literary critic, Graham Huggan (2001), however, argues against the value of the economic capital offered by many award organisation saying that literary prizes are "reflections of shifting patterns of patronage, with an increasing emphasis on public sponsorship, and, above all, as signs of the dominant role played by international industry as a legitimising agent for literature and the other arts" (105). Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke in *Free Exchange* (1995) also dismiss the relationship between funding organisations and literary producers, noting that it increases "material and mental dependence on economic powers and market constraints" (15). Despite this criticism of the award sector, the CWSSP and the CP remain the most consistent and prestigious prizes for the contemporary African short story. The Commonwealth Prize is funded by the Commonwealth Foundation and administered by the Book Trust while, according to the CP website,

> The Caine Prize is principally supported by The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, the *Booker Prize Foundation*, Miles Morland, Weatherly International plc, China Africa Resources and CSL Stockbrokers. Other funders include the DOEN Foundation, British Council, The Lennox and Wyfold Foundation, The Beit Trust, *Commonwealth Writers*, the cultural initiative from the *Commonwealth Foundation*, the Royal Over Seas League and Kenya Airways. (Caine Prize, "news", n.p)

The Caine, therefore, does not only benefit from the symbolic capital of the Booker but from the financial support from both the Booker and the Commonwealth foundations too. The Caine, informally referred to as the "African Booker" (Pucherová 2011), has not only inherited the positive but also the negative capital of the Booker. One of the major tainting images of the Booker comes from its long history of economic and colonial oppression in the Caribbean Islands. The award was founded in 1968 when Booker McConnell Ltd announced a £5,000 prize for fiction to a British or Commonwealth author. Huggan (2001) describes the Booker McConnel firm, which was the main funding body for the prize, as "a leading multinational agribusiness conglomerate […] initially formed in 1834 to provide distributional services on the sugar-estates of Demerara (now Guyana)" and "achieved rapid prosperity under a harsh colonial regime" (106-107). This history of colonial domination and exploitation associated with the Booker is what prompted the 1972 winning author John Berger to protest against Booker McConnell's involvement in the Caribbean by donating half of his prize money to the British Black Panther Movement (Berger 2001). As Huggan (2001) further observes, the Booker's history of exploitation and its "eager[ness] to downplay its nineteenth-century colonial past" demonstrates "a history in contradiction with its current reputation as a postcolonial literary patron" (106). As such, the Booker's awarding of literature from the Commonwealth nations as well as the economic and cultural value it has bestowed upon the CP gives the impression of "a colonial authority presiding over postcolonial texts" (Roberts 40).

While the Booker and the Caine prizes have to deal with the legacy of exploitation in the Caribbean, the Commonwealth Prize also has to contend with a history of power and domination. The name 'Commonwealth' in itself invokes the history of colonial domination by the British Empire. The awarding of a prize that is conceived and presented from the former colonial empire is controversial and calls for an evaluation of what constitutes such literature beyond the geographical categorisation of its writers. This calls to mind Salman Rushdie's 1984 proclamation in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) that "Commonwealth

literature does not exist" (63). Rushdie argued that this categorisation of literature was only used to present the literature outside of Britain as being a lesser or impoverished Other, measured against the 'standard' literature of Britain. He argued that the formation of a Commonwealth literature led to the creation of a false category which could lead to narrow and misleading interpretations of the literary works. Rushdie was of the opinion that Commonwealth literature had created a ghetto of the literature of former colonies adding that

> [n]ot only was it a ghetto, but it was actually an exclusive ghetto. And the effect of creating such a ghetto was, is, to change the meaning of the far broader term 'English literature' – which I'd always taken to mean simply the literature of the English language – into something far narrower, something topographical, nationalistic, possibly even racially segregationist. (63)

Rushdie's view was affirmed by Amitav Gosh almost two decades later when Gosh declined the Commonwealth Best Book Award in 2001 for his novel *The Glass Palace* (2000). In a letter to *The Times of India*, Ghosh (2001) argued that his nominated novel was only considered for the award "partly because it was written in English and partly because I happen to belong to a region that was once conquered and ruled by imperial Britain. Of the many reasons why a book's merits may be recognized, these seem to be the least persuasive."[18] This response was a retort against the authority of an award that was marred by a history of colonial oppression to canonise and categorise writers according to their history as dominated subjects. It is a call to rewrite history especially by the former dominated subjects. Rushdie's, Ghosh's and Berger's action called into question the validity of these prize organisations as institutions of cultural production. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the inception of the Commonwealth Prize in 1987 came "at a time when the category of 'Commonwealth literature' had truly started to fall into disrepute" and "[i]t is not surprising that the Commonwealth Foundation decided to reactivate the value of the term by launching a prize onto the global marketplace under new rules of art which foresee a specific economy of prestige in which literary merit is filtered through many agents with marketing and ideological interests" (Ponzanesi 68-69). I argue, therefore, that the Commonwealth Prize paradoxically attempts to expand the cultural capital of the former empire in a manner that at once embraces diversity but also exploits difference of the margins (former colonies) from

[18] See: http://www.outlookindia.com/article/the-conscientious-objector/211102. Also quoted in Rebecca Allison, "Novelist quits 'imperial' contest." *The Guardian* (22 March 2001), 5 and in Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Market* (2007), 71.

the center (the empire) and this way, the award plays a significant role in creating a particular literary taste that is framed within the political boundaries defined by the Commonwealth..

The denial of the history of colonial domination, as revealed by these prize organisations that are mainly based in Britain, is further demonstrated by the spectacularisation of the award giving ceremony. In the presentation of the now discontinued Commonwealth Writers Prize (1987–2013), the winners would usually be invited for an audience with the head of the Commonwealth – the Queen. This ceremony demonstrated a tradition of political power play which is also echoed in the Caine Prize, where the award is presented at a dinner held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford in the presence of Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, the president of the Caine council, who "was ennobled and took her seat as a member of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom Parliament in 1997" (Caine Prize, "Trustees" n.d.). In his memoir, *One Day I Will Write About this Place* (2011), Wainaina satirises his invitation to the award dinner following his Caine shortlisting in 2002. His satirised rephrasing of the invitation letter reads:

> Dear Caine Prize Shortlisted Guy, called Binya…vanga. Do you want to come to England, and have dinner in the House of Lords, and do readings and go to the Bodleian Library for a dinner of many courses, with wine, and all of London's literati? At this dinner, you will find out if Baroness Somebody important will give you fifteen thousand dollars in cash, and even if she doesn't, you should come because being shortlisted and having dinner at the House of Lords and such is like a big deal, a really big deal. (189)

The tradition of winning writers receiving their literary consecration from the cultural and political leaders of the former dominating empire demonstrates that "the final prize is inextricably bound up in imperial history and a stark power imbalance: that of subjects, from all regions of the Commonwealth, bowing before their monarch" (Robberts 47). The material and political dependence, therefore, promotes the production of a literature weighed by patronage and this is reflected in the texts as well.

Through the prize-winning stories, the writers also demonstrate the continuous link between Africa and former colonial empires where, strategically, these prize organisations are based. Claire Squires (2004) confirms the continued linkage of the histories of postcolonial nations and the empire through the literary prize. In the article "A Common Ground? Book Prize Culture in Europe", she notes:

> Literary prizes are intrinsically bound up with the histories of nations, empires and their peoples. Europe's long history as both coloniser and colonised, as a place of emigration and immigration, as a place of war and reconciliation, is played out […] in literary prizes. (45)

The Booker Prize winning novels, for instance, have continuously engaged with the recurrent theme of historical revisionism. Huggan, discussing the role of the Booker in prizing others, is of the opinion that:

> There is still a residual conservatism playing about the Booker's edges — a conservatism brought out in approaches to the prizewinning novels' themes. One such theme, sometimes considered to be a gauge of the Booker's postcolonial leanings, is *revisionist history*. More than half of the prizewinning novels to date investigate aspects of, primarily colonial, history or present a counter-memory to the official historical record. (111)

Indeed, this history is also widely played out in the stories presented for both the Caine and Commonwealth prizes. The winning short stories range from the discussions of Africa's violent encounter with Europe through the arrival of missionaries and settlers to experiences of colonialism and forced participation in the world wars to the turmoil of many postcolonial nations as well as the subsequent migrations and displacements and sometimes present a counter-memory to what is known as the official history.

The first story to win the CP in 2000 was "The Museum" by Sudanese writer Leila Abouleila. In this story, which is set in Aberdeen, a European city, a young African student, Shadia, comes face to face with the remnants of colonialism when she and a fellow student, Bryan, visit a museum about Africa in Scotland. The story deals with the lingering psychological implication of the history of colonialism on the "former coloniser and colonised" (Hassan 300). In this museum, relics of Africa's colonial and precolonial era are displayed. As the story's narrator describes the visit to the museum:

> The first thing they [Shadia and Bryan] saw was a Scottish man from Victorian times. He sat on a chair surrounded with possessions from Africa, overflowing trunks, an ancient map […] A hero who had gone away and come back, laden, ready to report. (53)

This story echoes the violence of dispossession that characterised colonialism. It also presents an exhibition of this violence in the archives of the former colonial power. Just like the museum in this short story, the British-based award organisation like the CP or the CWSSP act as a stage for monumentalising this past that is coloured by the violence and trauma of the postcolony. As the first short story to win the prestigious prize, it also foregrounds the historical relationship between the empire and the former colonial nations as presented through the prize that is administered in Britain on behalf of Africa.

Rotimi Babatunde, in his 2012 Caine winning story "Bombay's Republic", revisits the past to tell the story of Africans' involvement in World War II. Colour Sargent Bombay is a "the veteran who went off with the recruitment officers to Hitler's War as a man and came back a spotted leopard" (10). The story starts with the local African youths' reluctance to join a war they knew nothing about, the story then moves to the forced recruitments, the battle field and finally ends with the return of the veteran and the display of posttraumatic stress as a result of the war. In this captivating narrative, told from an African soldier's view about his journeys in foreign lands and his encounters with different people, one cannot miss the echo of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) recreated from an African explorer's perspective. Other stories, including E.C. Osondu's "Waiting" (Caine 2009), Jackee Budesta Batanda's "Dance with me" (Commonwealth 2003/4), and Anietie Isong's "Diary of an Ecomog Soldier" (Commonwealth 2000/1), all focus on the civil wars, among other ills, that have historically ravaged different parts of the African continent. Unfortunately, the attention given to historical, social and political realities on the continent has resulted in the Caine and Commonwealth stories developing a taste for pain and suffering in contemporary African literature – a perspective that I explore in details in chapter four of this dissertation.

The effect of business or other forms of economic sponsorship in literature is also felt in other awards that are not necessarily framed within the colonial and postcolonial frame. For instance, the Nigeria Prize for Literature sponsored by Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) is ridden with controversy around its taste for winning works. The award, one of the richest in the world, is partly sponsored by the petroleum company, Shell, which partly owns the NLNG. The prize therefore is inextricably tied to the exploitative history of oil extraction in the Delta region. Various literary texts from Nigeria have described the negative effects on the environment, economics and even the social life of the people directly affected by oil extraction. The literature documenting the environmental and economic ills associated with the oil extraction in Nigeria spans many years from Ken Saro Wiwa's works, which resulted

in his execution, to contemporary Nigerian writers like Ken Wiwa, author of *In the Shadow of a Saint* (2000); Ibiwari Ikiriko, *Oily Tears of The Delta: Poems* (2000); Habila in *Oil on Water* (2010), among others. Despite the rise of this literature, none of the texts awarded the NLNG prize has touched on the effects of oil mining. In this regard, therefore, the prize continues to silence literature that questions the role of the funding body in environmental degradation. Besides, as Nigerian critic Ikhide R. Ikheloa writes, the NLNG prize, launched in 2004, has kept honouring phantom books which are never available for readers but "are definitely available for prize sponsors."[19] Much of this has to do with the fact that many of the books entered for the prize are self-published and specifically targeted for the prize.

Dobrota Pucherová (2011) and Huggan (2001) present African writers as wilful participants in their own marginalisation by allowing themselves to be influenced by foreign sponsorship. In fact, Pucherová (2011) argues, erroneously, that through the Caine prize, the African writer is participating in his/her own marginalisation by continually seeking legitimacy from international prize organisations. This perspective is also evident in English's (2005) argument where he postulates that, "the investment of foreign symbolic capital in emergent symbolic markets has been seen […] as a means of sustaining less overtly and directly the old patterns of imperial control over symbolic economies and hence over cultural practice itself" (298). However, unlike Pucherová, English is also quick to add that this kind of control can be interpreted both positively and negatively: as an ethical obligation for the former empire and also as a necessity for the postcolonial world. Michael Titlestad, who has served on many occasions as a judge for various South African awards, including the M-NET Literary Award, notes that although different prize organisers operate within a kind of political web that can be viewed as an investment of foreign symbolic capital, the writers are never blind to this political and economic patronage. Writing in "Capital Games", Titlestad argues that

> …these investments are as vexed as any direct flow of money to formerly colonized territories: they come with conditions; no matter how well intentioned, they often reflect only the priorities of the investors; and, they often accord value in terms of metropolitan categories rather than recognizing different systems of cultural practice. The matter is not, however, simply hydraulic: postcolonial writers have used prizes to insinuate their own priorities into various cultural fields—many are active, even wily, players in the global economy of prestige. (466)

[19] Online. Available at: http://xokigbo.com/2013/09/17/the-nlng-prize-for-literature-honoring-phantom-books-laziness-and-mediocrity/

While reliance on foreign validating bodies and mechanisms that dictate taste on the writers has significantly contributed to the stereotypical presentation of African literature as one characterised by the "aesthetic of suffering" (Brouillette 2007; Habila 2014) I argue for the need to adopt English's perspective and focus on 'positive patronage' that allows the growth of literature from the less known areas. Positive patronage in this sense is one that gives a voice to the artists who would otherwise have been unable to write due to economic or other political constraints. A literary prize that offers a lucrative award to the writer also gives him/her the symbolic and cultural capital necessary to catapult the writer to the international market place. The money, therefore, has become a form of positive patronage. However, my main argument is that these writers have learnt to negotiate through the different prize requirements, in the creation of a literary taste. The writers have managed to use the symbolic as well as the economic capital that comes with these prizes as a launch pad to greater literary heights. Wilson-Tagoe (2005), writing in *Wasafiri*, notes:

> It has been suggested that literary prizes, especially those administered and judged in the West, may encourage African writers to pander to a particular Western vision of Africa as a world in crisis. But a continent that is in dire need of creative writers to tell its various stories should perhaps take such a risk if this would stimulate creative voices in the first place. It seems to me that for every false voice that 'misrepresents' Africa in a story there will be others who will explore its struggles and dilemmas with sensitivity and vision. (60)

Wilson-Tagoe here seems to be answering critics like Pucherová and Huggan who have argued that by seeking legitimation from foreign awards, African writers are actually participating in their own marginalisation (Huggan 2001; Pucherová 2011). Challenging Pucherová and Huggan's arguments, it is important for African writers to be able to seize these opportunities provided by international literary award institutions and, despite the patronage, tell their stories. This would allow them to acquire the economic, symbolic and cultural capital from the awards which enables writers to become politically and economically independent as individuals and also within their literature.

Writing in "The Caine Prize and the Impossibility of 'New' African Writing", Samantha Pinto argues that "African writers and postcolonial critics have received the prize both as a practical reward to be pursued in the face of minimal continental support for African writing, and a double-edged gift from the 'bloody colonizers,' (Wainaina, 188) […] one given in

exchange for compromised readings of African struggle and trauma" (142). Perhaps one of the contemporary writers who has best demonstrated the necessity of the 'double-edged gift' of the Caine Prize is Zambian-born writer Namwali Serpell. She was initially shortlisted for the award in 2010 for "Muzungu" and later won in 2015 for the short story, "The Sack." The winning story is about the consequences of unrealised political dreams, the echo of the past continually haunting the present. The two main characters in the story were once friends and together they were involved in a political revolution which did not materialise. From the characters' dialogue, it is also evident that their altercation was as a result of a love triangle involving a woman who is now dead. The short story was described by the 2015 Caine chair of judges, Zoë Wicomb, as "innovative, stylistically stunning, haunting and enigmatic in its effects." This story, she said, "challenges convention of genre", pushing the reader to keep exploring the different layers of meaning in the text (Caine Prize, "news", n.d.). However in her acceptance speech, Serpell protested against the Caine Prize structure arguing that it created an unhealthy competition amongst writers. Serpell maintained that literature is not a competition amongst writers and that an award should aim to honour a writer but not to create hierarchies and ranks, privileging one text over another on the basis of the judges' literary taste. In this regard, Serpell decided to share her £10,000 prize money equally amongst the 2015 shortlisted writers. In an interview with Radio France Internationale soon after her win, Serpell acknowledged that the decision to share her prize money was a premeditated one, adding:

> One of the reasons why I did want to split the money was, as describing it to my fellow shortlistees, as a kind of mutiny or as a kind of form of protest because it does seem that the resources for a prize like this are very much based in the West, and it's unfortunate in a way that you can't really have a proper conversation about who should be reading African literature, who should be writing African literature; you can't really have that conversation when there's money hanging over the conversation that, of course, we all as starving artists, need.[20]

Serpell's decision is a bold statement on the subjectivity of literary taste. It is also a demonstration of the futility of literary competitions as promoted by the award industry. This protest against the structure of an award body that presents literature as a Darwinian struggle of competition and survival of the fittest echoes John Berger's 1972 rejection of the Booker

[20] The interview is available online at: http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20150707-caine-prize-winner-namwali-serpell-writers-writer

Prize. Berger argued not only against the Booker's colonial history but also against the award industry's emphasis on winners and losers. Berger, in "Speech on Accepting the Booker Prize for Fiction at the Café Royal in London on 23 November 1972", declared his discontentment with the award industry saying: "The competitiveness of prizes I find distasteful. And in the case of this prize the publication of the shortlist, the deliberately publicised suspense, the speculation of the writers concerned as though they were horses, the whole emphasis on winners and losers is false and out of place in the context of literature" (253).

Serpell's decision also presents a demonstration of the importance of the cultural and symbolic capital that is conferred on the writer by a major literary award body such as the Caine prize. Of note in Serpell's action is the fact that, unlike writers like Amitav Gosh (2001 Commonwealth Best Book Award) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1964 Nobel Prize in Literature), she did not reject the award.[21] Although Serpell distributed her cash reward amongst the short-listed writers, she went ahead to accept the symbolic and cultural capital associated with the Caine Prize which includes writing fellowships, invitations to participate in literary festivals, introduction to publishers and literary agents etc. To reiterate Mack's (2010) idea of "capital intraconversion," (5) Serpell's decision demonstrates a writer's conscious awareness of the value of symbolic and cultural capital and its ability to be converted into different types of capital necessary in the global literary marketplace. Her rejection of the award money contrasts with NoViolet Bulawayo's in 2014 when she accepted the cash reward for the Etisalat Prize for Literature but declined the writing fellowship, passing it on to the first runner-up, Yewande Omotoso. The actions by these writers is not to necessarily reject the prize but to oppose the restrictive structures within these award bodies which present literature as a competitive race for literary taste.

The judging panel as a taste maker

English notes that the selection of judges for a prize panel is one of the most important functions for the prize organisers because the choice of judges ultimately influences the value associated with the award. He adds that "it is the first axiom among prize administrators that the prestige of a prize is reciprocally dependent on the prestige of its judges" (122). Explaining the contribution of awards towards creating a distinct literary and cultural taste,

[21] The French Marxist Jean-Paul Sartre turned down the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature, arguing that writers should not allow themselves to be turned into an institution. See David Carter's *How to Win the Novel Prize in Literature* (2012), 35–36.

Gillian Roberts in *Prizing Literature* (2011) notes that "literary prizes function to make aesthetic judgements about writing" and that "in the process of shortlisting and selecting winning texts, prizes (and the juries who make decisions about them) infuse works of literature with cultural value" (17). The taste of the judges thereby becomes the overall taste of the prize and for this reason the value of the prize's judges plays a very significant role in determining its prestige. English explains that "the stature of the judges guarantees the stature of the prize (hence, among other things, the willingness of the designated recipient to accept it), and the stature of the prize guarantees the honour associated with judging it" (123). Part of the prestige of the Caine comes from the fact that its patrons are sourced from the Nobel Prize in Literature's African winners list. The patrons have included: Wole Soyinka, J.M. Coetzee and the late Nadine Gordimer. The symbolic capital that judges bring to a prize competition cannot be bought or exchanged for economic capital. English says that the judges' "involvement with the prize is not a matter of performing work in exchange for payment," (122) adding that "simply paying judges an irresistibly attractive fee – compensating with economic capital for the shortage of symbolic capital […] is more difficult than it may appear" (123).In these prize stories produced under different social, political and economic environments, the final decision to award prestige and value lies with the judging panel.

When it comes to determining taste, the judges are usually selected in regard to the symbolic capital that they would bring to the prize. The more symbolically valuable the judge is culturally, the better placed the prize is in terms of prestige. The symbolic value of a judge is sourced from their experience in the cultural field that they are expected to judge as well as from their participation in other prestigious prizes as juries or winners. As English (2005) adds, "major international prizes are expected to feature international juries of famous, well-credentialed critics, artists and cultural leaders; and part of being culturally well-credentialed is the experience of having sat on the juries of major prizes" (122). The more prestigious awards a judge has been involved in, the more symbolic value the judge brings to a prize and the more prestigious a judge is, the more value he or she accords the prize. In this way, therefore, the judges and the prize organisation enter into a symbiotic relationship in which both benefit from the other in the search for symbolic and cultural capital. For instance, announcing the 2014 Commonwealth Short Story Prize judges, *Commonwealth Writers* listed the numerous prestigious accomplishments of the judges and the prizes they had previously judged. The 2014 chair of judges, Ellah Allfrey, is described thus:

> She is series editor for the *Kwani*? Manuscript Prize and sits on the board of the Writers' Centre Norwich and the arts selection panel for the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Centre. As well as serving as deputy Chair of the Caine Prize for African Writing, she is a patron of the Etisalat Literature Prize. She has served on numerous judging panels including the David Cohen Prize, the Caine Prize for African Writing and the BOCAS Prize for Caribbean Literature (Commonwealth Writers, "prizes", n.p).

In this way, the judges, who have gained symbolic value through other awards or through their involvement in the literary and cultural field, are able to engage in "capital intraconversion" (Mack 2010, 5). In this case, the symbolic capital is converted into cultural capital which gives judges such as Allfrey, J.M. Coetzee and Ben Okri the authority to stand as gatekeepers of literary production and determine which works or which authors are to be canonised. Huggan (2001) elaborates on the matter of authority, saying that "the writer himself/herself is only one of several 'agents of legitimation'— others might include booksellers, publishers, reviewers and, not least, individual readers and 'valuing communities'. These agents are all contenders in the struggle to validate particular writers; and the writers themselves vie for the right to attain and, in turn, confer recognition and prestige" (5). These various agents of legitimation have also been included in the two prizes' judging panels. Apart from writers, other judges usually include, for instance, academics, booksellers, journalists, and book editors who freely circulate between these two prizes to validate a writer and their work.

Some highly celebrated African writers were canonised by international literary awards and it is notable that some of them have managed to plough back the symbolic and economic value they have received to aid the careers of other younger and upcoming writers. Writers such as Okri, who chaired the first CP judging panel and has been a member of the council since its inception in 2000 until 2012 when he was appointed vice president of the prize, continue to lend their symbolic capital to cultural and literary production. Gordimer, Coetzee and Soyinka have also continued to promote African writing through different other prizes on the continent. Coetzee has served as chair of judges for different prizes, including the South African Centre of International PEN Award. In Nigeria, the Lumina Foundation in 2005 established the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa in honour of the author. This is a biannual award for literature from Africa. It is open to all genres of creative writing as well as essays on human rights. Gordimer in turn served on the judging panel of several literary

awards including the Booker and the Caine. What these African writers have done is to use the symbolic power achieved through different international and prestigious prizes to influence literary and cultural production from Africa.

Symbolic capital therefore becomes an important investment for a prize and for this reason it becomes especially hard to legitimise a new prize which is struggling to gain prestige and has only economic capital to offer. Bourdieu explains in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) that "possession of economic capital does not *necessarily* imply possession of cultural or symbolic capital, and vice versa" (7). Sometimes, new and upcoming prizes have attempted to replace the symbolic capital that comes with the judging panel with the economic capital that the prize is associated with. For instance, the Burt Award for African literature, founded by Canadian William Burt, is open to writers from Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia and it is worth about US$20,000. In Kenya, this is the most profitable local literary prize. Other major literary awards in Kenya include the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature ($1,500), the Wahome Mutahi Literary Award ($500) and the once-off *Kwani*? Manuscript project which awarded $3,000 to the winning work. Although the Burt Award is highly lucrative financially, the Jomo Kenyatta and the Wahome Mutahi prizes attract a great deal of entries each year and consequently greater social as well as media attention, thereby contributing more than the Burt Award to cultural production in the region.[22]

The availability of economic capital, therefore, is not enough to gain prestige, especially for a new prize. The prize institution has to create equilibrium between the economic capital and the cultural and symbolic capital which can be achieved through the prominence of the judges. When the CP started in 2000, there were only a few other international prizes for the African short story. This included, among others, the Commonwealth Short Story Competition and the PEN award. At the time, the Commonwealth Short Story Competition awarded the highest prize set at £2,000. The amount of £10,000 offered by the Caine Prize was five times more than what the Commonwealth was offering. However, the organisers of the Caine had not entered into the literary prize market to replace the symbolic capital with the monetary capital. Its relatively large financial incentive was accompanied by an equally substantial symbolic capital which included, as mentioned earlier, Nobel laureates as patrons. Its first panel of judges was composed of renowned writers, academics and journalists,

[22] See: http://www.codecan.org/burt-award, http://www.kenyapublishers.org/about-kenya-publishers-association/13-awards and http://manuscript.kwani.org/
See also: https://libraries.indiana.edu/african-literary-awards-database

chaired by Booker Prize winner Ben Okri. Since then, the judges have been selected and sourced carefully in an effort to demonstrate commitment to African literature as well as to excellence.

One of the consistencies in the two prizes has been the selection of the judging panel each year which continues to foreground the importance of the academy in literary production. The Commonwealth judges have mainly been sought from the academic institutions and the creative literary field while the Caine's annual judges' composition usually include an award winning writer, a journalist and a representative from a university. This careful selection highlights the important role performed not only by the academy but the media industry as well towards influencing cultural production.

Graham Huggan (2001) underscores the important role that the media plays in not only promoting an award but in increasing the readership of the shortlisted and the winning writers too. Writing about the role of the media in promoting the Booker Prize, Huggan argues: "Widely regarded today as one of the world's top literary prizes, the Booker has acquired and cultivated a mythology of its own. Much of this has to do, of course, with careful media management" (107). The Commonwealth and Caine prizes, although more recent prizes in comparison to the Booker, have also learnt the careful art of media management. The Caine has excelled in attracting media attention through the various controversies that arise following the release of the shortlist each year. With the announcement of the first shortlist and winner in 2000, the media publicised the notion to the world that the new prize in Africa was referred to by many as the 'African Booker'. This branding came from the close relationship of the prize with the Booker Prize. The prize is named after the late Sir Michael Caine, former Chairman of Booker plc and Chairman of the Booker Prize management committee for nearly 25 years. The close ties with the Booker have ensured that the Caine, from its inception, adopted the symbolic capital associated with the Booker as well as the Booker's media attention and management.

Apart from the media, the centrality of the academy in the award industry as well as in the wider cultural production process in society has significantly influenced literary taste through the award judges who are more inclined to "academic topics" and as Sharon Norris (2006) confirms, "academic judges potentially bring with them the legitimacy of the School, which historically has played a major role in the process of literary consecration" (147). The academy is involved in the award sector through its participation in judging the prizes, its

social and economic partnership with awarding organisations and through its promotion of 'academic topics' in the award winning stories. In the context of literary awards, the judges have mainly been sourced from the academia while the topics and genres that continue to be foregrounded through different award institutions reflect academic interest in certain theoretical fields, such as postcolonial studies. Neil Lazarus, in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011), contends that the academy, through the university, has created and shaped postcolonial studies in a way that intersects only partially with the content and preoccupations of literature emerging from the so-called postcolonial world. He explains this by tracing the emergence of the word 'postcolonial' in its earliest usage which was used "in a strictly historically and politically delimited sense, to identify the period immediately following decolonisation" (10). Later, the word was taken up by academic institutions and ceased to be a historical category and became a political genre representing a euphemism for what used to be referred to as Third World literature. The canonisation of postcolonialism through postcolonial studies is, as Lazarus (2011) suggests, a reflection of the academy's own preoccupations and not necessarily of the preoccupations of writers (25). In this way, therefore, the academy becomes a broker of literary value by its influence on canon formation and mediation through literary prize committees.

In the same light, prize organisations can also be analysed as agents of literary value whose influence and preoccupations are reflected on the short-listed and winning texts. For instance, the preoccupation with academic topics such as diasporisation, Afropolitanism and hybridity in many of the winning stories from both the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes could be analysed as a reflection of the influence of the academy on literary production. This is foregrounded by the fact that most of the contemporary African writers juggle writing with working as academics at different universities across the globe. Writers living and writing in the diaspora are better placed in terms of access to international publishers, to different literary prizes as well as a wider market for their works.

The 2013 CP winning story, "Miracle", narrates the lives of Nigerian immigrants in a small town in Texas. The story by Tope Folarin, who is himself a child of immigrant parents, focuses on the tensions between a faraway home in Nigeria and another one in the US where the immigrants' constant prayer is: "We need our parents to understand that we are Americans. We need our children to understand they are Nigerians" (74). "Light" (CWSSP 2015) by Lesley Nneka Arimah, on the other hand, explores the family tensions brought about by immigration and exile. In this story, a family is gradually torn apart after the mother

leaves for America for further studies. It soon dawns on the husband and the daughter left behind that she will never return. Pede Hollist's "Foreign Aid" (CP 2013), Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's "Let's Tell this Story Properly" (CWSSP 2014) and "La Salle de Départ" (CP 2012) by Melissa Tandiwe Myambo are other winning stories that further explore the experiences of life in the diaspora and the expectations of those left behind. In "Foreign Aid" (Hollist 2012), Logan moves from Sierra Leone to the US, chasing the American dream. He finally goes back home after more than 20 and his acquired stereotypes about his country are subverted when he realised that there is no one always looking up to him for foreign aid. Makumbi's short story starts with the death of a Ugandan man in Europe and his widow having to take his body back home for burial. It is only when she arrives in Uganda that she realises that her husband lived a double life; complete with another wife and children. "La Salle de Départ" (Myambo 2012) narrates the familial tensions that results in migrations and immigrations, exploring the financial burden and social obligations imposed on those in the diaspora by their extended family.

Translations, migrations and the diasporisation of texts and authors are trends evident in other prize winning works including Booker shortlisted novel *We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009) which was long listed for the 2010 Orwell Prize for political writing. Translation and migration is visible not only in the content of the texts, but also evident from the books and magazines from where the stories are originally published. Despite the different efforts to create more opportunities for short story writers to get published in Africa, the trend in the shortlisted stories for the CP shows that most of the stories by African writers in the diaspora are initially published abroad in Western magazines, journals, newspapers and anthologies. On the same note, a majority of the winning works in the Commonwealth Prize comes from writers based in the diaspora. In 2013 the CP winning story, "Miracle" by Tope Folarin, appeared in *Transition* while the other three shortlisted ones were initially published in the *Journal of Progressive Human Services, Per Contra* and *Granta*. The shortlists from previous years also demonstrate the dominance of not only diasporic writers but the international magazines, journals and anthologies as well. *Wasafiri, Transition, Guernica, St Petersburg Review, The Paris Review, Open Wide, African American Review,* and *Granta* lead the list with most of the shortlists coming from their publications. Publications in these international magazines and anthologies emphasises the significant role the diaspora continues to play in African literary culture production. Stories which eventually make it to the shortlist are produced, published and

marketed in the West before finally gaining a western stamp of quality through the international awards for African writing and are mainly concerned with diasporic imaginations.

Pucherová, who points at the privileged role of the African writer in the diaspora, observes that the Caine "has tended to reward many diasporic authors whose stories first appeared in British and US literary magazines, rather than Africa-based authors, and has relied on UK- and US-based judges" (22). She is critical of the privileged role of the African writer in the diaspora, arguing that literary awards such as the Caine Prize's foregrounding of these writers and their diasporic narratives only serves in "continuing the tradition of western criticism of African literature" (22). Indeed, Benita Parry in "Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies" argues against the privileging of hybridity and narratives of exile as the only postcolonial canon. She adds that "the rapt interest of Western academies in migration or exile entails a neglect of situations in post-independence nation-states, since "diaspora" has swelled to demarcate the entire experience of postcoloniality and the subject-position of the "hybrid" is routinely expanded as the only political-conceptual space for revisionist enunciation" (72). In this sense, therefore, the judges, through academia, have greatly contributed to shaping literary taste by foregrounding such stories in the awards.

The judges for the two prizes have contributed to the generation and promoting of taste in different ways and have also demonstrated that the relationship between the Caine and the Commonwealth prize competitions goes beyond the funding level to influence the kind of writings produced with an eye on the prize. One of the emerging issues here is the dialogue between the two prizes, facilitated not only by the writers but also by the judges of the two prizes and the major funding bodies. Various judges circulate between the two prizes in an effort to promote the symbolic value of each award body. In the past, CP and CWSSP judges have been drawn from other highly valued prizes panels (e.g. the Booker), while others have also been sourced from previous winners. Judges who have served on different prize juries include Bernardine Evaristo, who served on both prizes' panels in 2012; Ellah Allfrey, the Deputy Chair of the Council of the Caine Prize and previously Deputy Editor of *Granta* also chaired the 2014 Commonwealth Short Story Prize; and Billy Kahora was shortlisted for the Caine in 2012 and judged the Commonwealth Short Story Prize in the same year. Kahora was also one of the judges for the 2013 Etisalat Prize for Literature and he is the Managing Editor of *Kwani*?. The choice of the judging panel demonstrates the importance of a careful selection of the body tasked with conferring authority and legitimacy on a literary work. The

selection of judges is therefore made to ensure that these two prizes reach their common goal of 'promoting African literature to the highest level'.

This interaction between the award bodies, facilitated by the judges, can be explained partly by the common ties at the management level of the two prizes. Bourdieu argues that the fundamental stake in literary struggles is usually the monopoly of literary legitimacy. The award organisations, through the various judges and the impositions, continue to be gatekeepers who control what is canonised as literature from Africa. The close interaction and dialogue between these two main prizes for the African short story affirms that the two have dominated as the validating bodies for African literature. In view of Bourdieu's argument in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), then, the CP and CWSSP hold "the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers" (42). This monopoly is brought about mainly because the legitimising bodies also possess the economic, the symbolic as well as the cultural capital; the capital which, as Bourdieu (1993) further notes, is always unevenly distributed, because it circulates within a symbolic economy of cultural value that is configured in a series of interlocking hierarchical structures (42).

Prizing the contemporary African short story

Despite the inherited history of colonial domination, together, the CP and CWSSP have contributed significantly to the production of a cultural and literary industry on the continent through the focus on the short story. The short story genre is still the most disadvantaged in terms of publications. However, in recognition of the genre and its influence in literary works from Africa and beyond, the Commonwealth Writers changed their prize focus beginning in 2014. The Commonwealth Writers, in a press statement on its website, announced that they had decided to refocus the competition and centre on the short story alone. This means that the Commonwealth Book Prize, which was initially offered together with the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, was dropped in favour of the short story genre. The statement continues to note that "[t]he Short Story Prize enables writers to enter from countries where there is little or no publishing industry" and that it "aims to identify talented writers who will go on to inspire their local communities" (Commonwealth Writers, "prizes", n.d). This came after the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to short story writer Alice Monroe. The Canadian writer became the first writer to win the Nobel for work in the short story genre. In a press release following the announcement, the Swedish Academy, administers of the Nobel

Prize, referred to Monroe as a "master of the contemporary short story"[23] and this has acted as a major enhancement to the popularity and significance of this genre of writing.

F. Odun Balogun observes in *Tradition and Modernity in the African Short Story* (1991) that the short story genre is "a paradoxical form patronised by both beginners and accomplished writers" (4). However, analysing the trend in the shortlisted and winning writers from both the Caine and Commonwealth competitions reveals that these prizes continue to reward new and upcoming writers and this practice has resulted in the labelling of the short story as a genre in transition, at least within the contemporary African literary scene. Following shortlisting or winning the Caine, many of these stories have been developed into novels which the authors have in turn presented for the Commonwealth Book Prize. Other writers have continued to submit different stories to the two competitions which have earned them recognition from both institutions of literary canonisation. Adichie, who was shortlisted for the CP in 2002, was runner-up in the Commonwealth Short Story Competition in the same year for "The Tree in Grandma's Garden." Nigerian writer Chika Unigwe won the Commonwealth Short Story Competition in 2003 for "Weathered Smiles" and her short story "The Secret" was shortlisted for the Caine the following year. Sefi Atta and Lauri Kubuitsile have also been previously shortlisted for the two awards. Atta's story, "The Last Trip", was shortlisted for the Caine in 2006 and "Fire" was highly commended in the 2003 Commonwealth short Story Competition. Kubuitsile was shortlisted for the Commonwealth competition in 2004 for "A Pot Full of Tears" and in 2006/2007 for "The Test." She was later shortlisted for the Caine in 2011 with "In the Spirit of McPhineas Latta."

As demonstrated by most of the past winners who have extended their winning stories into novels, the short story has been "invariably treated as a mere appendage to the novel" (Balogun 4). It is, however, important to note that the 2015 Caine shortlist included writers who previously had been shortlisted or had won the same award. This inclusion could be interpreted as an indication that the prize has finally come of age and has eventually stopped awarding only the 'emerging' voices. It could be a positive development in the African literary market, seeking to demonstrate that the prize, as well as the writers, no longer perceives the short story as an apprentice genre.

The focus on the short story genre, therefore, must be understood within the larger framework of cultural production: as a generator of literary taste as well as a genre resulting from an

[23] Online. Available at: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2013/press.html

acquired literary taste. As Lee Erikson notes in *The Economy of the Literary Form* (1996), "the history of literary forms demonstrates that literature is materially and economically embedded in the reality of the publishing market" (8). The economic setting of literary production is directly linked with the choice of genre for writers, publishers, readers as well as prize organisations. Indeed, as Terry Eagleton (1976) affirms, literature may be a social artefact but it is also an industry. An analysis of the award sector and its influence on the text is therefore an attempt to examine the production structures in order to better understand the circulation of both economic and literary value in the global market since "[b]ooks are not just structures of meaning, they are also commodities produced by publishers and sold on the market at a profit" (Eagleton 59).

Publishing as a prize

English retells a humorous anecdote in *The Economy of Prestige* (2005) about an incident where a British writer attended a writers' meeting and he turned out to be "one of only two fiction writers present never to have won a literary award" (18). English equates this obsession with prizes to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) in the incident where after a race, everybody wanted to know who had won but the Dodo ruled that "[e]*verybody* has won, and all must have prizes" (24). Although English (2005) acknowledges that prizes are important to artists and, in this case, to writers, he covers the topic in the chapter "Prize Frenzy" by satirising prize proliferation, especially in the Western world. However, despite the flooding of these prizes, awards still remain the most important measures of the value of an artist.

Helon Habila in his debut novel, *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), explains the significance of an international prize to a writer faced with political and economic constraints. In the novel a young journalist, Lomba, and his newspaper editor talk about publishing and literary awards in Nigeria at a time when the country is facing different sanctions and suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations.[24] The ambitious Lomba is trying to publish a novel but his editor is discouraging him:

[24] Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations between 11 November 1995 and 29 May 1999, following the execution of writer and political activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. He was executed, together with eight other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), by the military government of Sani Abacha for their campaign against environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region. They were hanged

> You won't find a publisher in this country because it'd be economically unwise for any publisher to waste his scarce paper to publish a novel which nobody would buy, because the people are too poor, too illiterate, and too busy trying to stay out of the way of the police and the army to read. And of course you know why paper is scarce and expensive – because of the economic sanctions placed on our country. But forget all that. Say you found an indulgent publisher to publish your book, someone who believes in this great book as much as you do; and because you are sure your book is good, you'd want to enter it for a competition – what is the most obvious competition for someone from a Commonwealth country? Of course, the Commonwealth Literary Prize. But you can't do that […] Because Nigeria was thrown out of the Commonwealth of Nations early this morning. (192)

The two characters in Habila's novel acknowledge the legitimacy and approval that a writer earns from winning an international literary award. While writers in the Western world are overwhelmed by prize proliferation, African writers on the continent continue to decry the few literary competitions open to them. An online African literary awards database at the Indiana University, Bloomington library, estimates the number of prizes available to African writers as 269. However, a closer scrutiny shows that most of these prizes are no longer available, while others were just once-off prizes. Some of the one-off prizes include the 2012 *Kwani*? Manuscript Project, while other prizes like the East African Writers Award, the Margaret Wrong Prize and Medal for African Literature or the NOMA Award for Publishing in Africa have already been suspended, mainly for lack of funding.

The excerpt from Habila's novel which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the 2003 Best First Book, Africa Region, paints a picture not only of the difficulties that attend literary publication and readership in African contexts, but also of the importance of the literary and market validation that comes with an internationally recognised award. In Lomba's case, the Commonwealth Prize is his most obvious option, but he has to get his book published first before he can enter it for the prize. It is important to note that this novel in which Habila writes about the difficulties faced by African writers in the search for authentication and canonisation was initially self-published. After a chapter from the book won the CP, the book was later acquired and published by an international publisher – Penguin Press. The issues raised in this novel regarding publishing and canonisation on the continent are problems that

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on the eve of the 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. See Craig W. McLuckie and Aubrey McPhail (2000).

twenty-first century writers on the continent still grapple with. Hans M. Zell in "Publishing in Africa: where are we now?" sums up these obstacles that the writer in Africa faces, saying:

> Many parts of the African continent continue to be afflicted by progressively deteriorating economic conditions. Social, cultural and infrastructure problems abound. Low literacy levels, the multiplicity of languages, limited access to books and library services, poor transport and communications networks, severely under-funded educational systems, shortages of capital and skills — these are some of the obstacles that have always been cited as hindrances to the development of African publishing. They still are. (188)

In the African context, the most constraining factor that hinders production of literary culture is the setbacks brought about by a poor publishing industry and this has also affected the local literary award industries. As Zell notes, poor economic conditions in most parts of the continent have negatively affected the publishing industry, a sector dominated by textbook publishing. Textbooks are deemed more marketable and therefore more profitable in comparison to literary publications. It is estimated that 60-70 per cent of all books published in Africa are textbooks (Sida and Lars et al, 1999). But, in a continent whose publishing industry is suffocating under the weight of economic, social and political uncertainties, the very act of getting published is no mean feat and, for most writers, it is considered a reward in itself, demonstrating that "all publishing that involves the selection of works to publish involves the awarding of distinction" (Mack 295). The very act of publication, especially for new and inexperienced writers, is a huge achievement.

This concern is also raised in *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) when the editor nonchalantly asks whether Lomba has considered the difficulties of getting a literary publisher. How can one win a literary prize if the work is not published yet? In the Caine Prize competition, the writer's first step towards winning the award is to ensure that the short story gets published before the submission deadline because this prize does not accept unpublished manuscripts. The submission rules are however different in the Commonwealth story prize which allows writers to submit their own original and unpublished work. Habila's novel identifies poverty as the main reason for the decline or the lack of publishing structures on the continent. In his memoir, Wainaina (2011) also raises the same concerns. Writing about his experiences with the Caine competition, he recounts how he initially submitted his short story, which had previously been published by an online magazine, g21.net, and the Caine organisers replied,

expressing their regret, saying that they "only accept stories published in print" (188). Wainaina's response was: "Only one anthology has been published in Africa in the past year" (188) and this led to a change in submission rules, with the Caine opening its doors to digital literary publications.

Political censorship and lack of resources in different parts of Africa have played a significant role in hampering the growth of the publishing industry and has proved that the publishing sector is directly connected to the growth or decline of literary awards in any given region. In Africa, countries with highly developed publishing sectors, such as South Africa and Nigeria, have more local literary awards for their writers as opposed to their counterparts with less affluent sectors. Some of these awards in Nigeria include the previously mentioned NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature, the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature, the Etisalat Prize for Literature, the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Awards and Engineer Mohammed Bashir Karaye Prize in Hausa Literature, among others. Some of South Africa's prestigious prizes include the aforementioned *Sunday Times* Barry Ronge Fiction Prize, the PEN/Studzinski Literary Award, the South African Literary Award (SALA), M-Net Literary Awards, Maskew Miller Longman literature awards for all South African official languages, and the Exclusive Books Boeke Prize. This head start, aided by the strong publishing sector, has ensured that writers from these two countries are continually represented in international literary awards.

Despite different setbacks to local publishing, the now defunct NOMA award for publishing in Africa, which ran from 1979 to 2009, played a significant role in promoting publishing in Africa. This organisation was founded by the late Shoichi Noma, formerly President of Kodansha Ltd, a Japanese publishing house. The award aimed to promote African publishing by awarding US$10,000 annually to an African writer or scholar whose work was published by an autonomous African publisher on the continent. The prize was awarded for an outstanding new book in any of the categories of "academic and scholarly books, children's books, and literature and creative writing" (Kimani 112). It is therefore disappointing to note that since 2009, when the sponsorship from the Noma family ceased, there has not been another prize created to fill the void left by the NOMA award.

To deal with the bleak dynamics of publishing, some African writers have opted to source for publishers outside the continent. Contemporary African writers such as Chimamanda Adichie, NoViolet Bulawayo, Aminatta Forna, Mukoma wa Ngugi, Brian Chikwava, Leila

Abouleila and Alain Mabanckou among others, continue to get published abroad first before their works are distributed in the continent's publishing industry, usually through a co-publishing agreement. The annual CP anthologies, which include the shortlisted stories, are initially published in the UK by the New Internationalist. The anthologies reach the African market through a co-publishing agreement with local publishers which include Bookworld (Zambia), Cassava Republic (Nigeria), Lantern Books (Nigeria), FEMRITE (Uganda), Jacana Media (South Africa), *Kwani*? (Kenya), Sub-Saharan Publishers (Ghana), 'amaBooks (Zimbabwe) and Langaa (Cameroon).[25] The winning and shortlisted stories from the Commonwealth Short Story Prize are also published in the UK by *Granta* and in Canada by Dundurn publishers.[26]

Due to social, economic and political realities on the continent, leading to increased migrations and translations, many African writers have found it more rewarding and easier to publish their works outside the continent where the diasporic positioning places them at an advantage in terms not only of marketing their works but also of winning other international prizes. Walter Bgoya and Mary Jay in "Publishing in Africa from Independence to the Present Day" acknowledge that publishing is a partnership between the publisher and the author and that it is the choice of the later to choose a publisher (26). A look at the shortlisted stories for the CP in the sixteen years it has been in existence reveals that more than half of its winning or shortlisted stories were initially published outside the African continent. In 2013 and 2015, for instance, four of the five shortlisted stories each year were originally published outside Africa and this has continued to raise a heated media and academic debate about the 'Africanness' of these stories mainly produced, distributed and authenticated outside the continent.[27] The role of foreign publishers both within and outside the African continent can therefore not be underestimated. In her book *Something Else Will Stand Beside It* (1998), Camille B Lizarríbar explains that

[25] For the full list of the publishing collaborations, see: http://www.caineprize.com/pdf/2014_CP_expands_publishing_network.pdf
[26] Online. Available at: http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/updates/commonwealth-short-story-prize-regional-winners-published-granta
[27] See for example: http://mg.co.za/article/2015-07-10-caine-prize-gets-the-sack ; http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-07-11-the-caine-prize-controversy-how-african-do-you-have-to-be/#.VhOUT_mqpBc ; http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2015/0506/The-Caine-Prize-Is-it-the-foreign-gatekeeper-of-Africa-s-fiction and Pucherová, Dobrota. "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last: Notes on the Caine Prize." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2011): 13-25. Vol. 48. 1.

> African authors will often turn to foreign publishers because of a general mistrust in local publishing, and to be assured of a higher quality product. Therefore, both writers and books are geared primarily towards an outside audience. This vicious circle seems to be a well-established mechanism which hinders the growth of an African book industry by continuously directing its resources and products towards an external supplier and consumer. (qtd. in Huggan 51)

All these factors combined have historically hindered the growth of African literary publications on the continent. The uneven distribution of economic and cultural capital results in misrepresentations, or lack of representation, within the canon. Following on Bourdieu's (2005) and Guillory's (1993) postulations, therefore, unequal representation of African writers in the publishing sector leads to unequal representation in the literary canon defined by the award sector. Indeed, a history of a poor publishing industry on the continent has led to lack of representation of many African writers in global literary forums. However, the publishing sector has particularly benefited greatly from the emergence of digital literary platforms, especially after 2000. The internet has provided a very important and much-awaited opportunity for writers who would otherwise not have been able to access a wider audience. Habila, in the introduction to *The Granta Book of the African Short Story* (2011) argues that the internet is playing the role that the newspaper played in promoting the short story in Europe and America at the start of the industrial age. The short story especially has profited greatly from internet publications mainly because of the brevity of the genre which makes it more compatible with the internet as opposed to other literary genres including the novel and the play. Some of the stories for the Caine are sourced from the internet and the shortlists from the two competitions are initially published online and made available to internet users even before the print publications come out. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is important to remember that the CP initially accepted only short stories that had previously been published in print. The first online stories were accepted in 2002 when the Kenyan writer, Wainaina, won with his story originally published in an online magazine. In the article "The Caine Prize and Contemporary African Writing" Lizzy Attree observes that "a significant breakthrough occurred when the Caine Prize altered its rules to allow authors to enter stories that had been published online" (38). Wainaina's winning story, "Discovering Home" (CP 2002), from g21.net online magazine is a travel narrative that traces the narrator's journey from South Africa through Kenya, Uganda and finally to Rwanda. In the story, the writer explores African identities by contextualising the idea of

home and belonging. The short story also actively engages with the deconstruction of stereotypical images of Africa. It is a writing that is aware of the conscious commodification of African peoples, their experiences, their geography etc. and the effect of this in creating a cultural and literary taste. The narrator argues that each individual makes a conscious effort regarding what to see:

> I know, chances are I will see no elephants for the weeks I am here. I will see people. It occurs to me that if I was White, chances are I would choose to see elephants — and this would be a very different story. That story would be about the wide, empty spaces people from Europe yearn to get lost in, rather than the cosy surround of kin we Africans generally seek.
>
> Whenever I read something by some White writer who stopped by Kenya, I am astounded by the amount of game that appears for breakfast at their patios and the snakes that drop into the baths and the lions that terrorise their calves. I have seen one snake in my life. I don't know anybody who has ever been bitten by one. (13-14)

Wainaina later expounds on these issues raised in "Discovering Home" in his satirical *Granta* article about the stereotypical representation of Africa in literature and the media, a topic I further engage with in chapter four of this study. The Caine Prize's selection of this story in 2002 served as a demonstration and acknowledgment that an online publication does not necessarily mean lack of quality; it is an act of legitimising internet publications, bringing them to the same level as the print publications: a timely strategy, especially considering the increasing number of internet users in Africa. The Internet World Stats survey revealed that by June 2014, Africa had approximately 300 million internet users, compared with 4.5 million in the year 2000 when the CP was first launched.[28] The decision by the Caine competition to accept online and journal publications has, therefore, been significant not only in influencing the prize culture but also in promoting online and journal publications in Africa. In fact, the digital publishing platforms have provided the contemporary writer with an alternative literary avenue to print publications, thereby contributing to the production and dissemination of "countercultures of taste" in African literary production (Gikandi 2011). The online literary magazines and journals have proved to be a much cheaper and suitable alternative in the background of a poorly funded publishing sector. Further, as I discuss later in chapters three and five of this dissertation, the influence of these alternative literary

[28] See the statistics availe online at: http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm

cultures that is mediated by the internet is slowly reaching the award sector through story submissions to the Caine and Commonwealth prizes.

Language and literary awards

Writing about literary publishing in South Africa, Peter D. McDonald in *The Literature Police* (2009) notes that during apartheid, the choice to publish in English rather than other South African languages was not mainly because English had access to a global literary marketplace, but rather because the trade in English-language books was "a measure of cultural value" (103). The English language has continued to be used as a measure for literary taste in contemporary writing where the major literary publishers are located in English speaking Western metropolises, mainly in the UK and US. As McDonald adds, publishing abroad and in English for most writers during the apartheid era helped them not only to avoid censorship but also to capture the international market (103). In contemporary African writing, publishing abroad and in English continues to bestow upon the writer the value of the local as well as the international literary market.

One of the main similarities between the Caine and Commonwealth prizes is the language requirement. These prize competitions accept short stories written, published or translated into English; a requirement which excludes several African writers who do not fall into this rigid language categorisation.[29] In fact, since the inception of these competitions, none of the short stories that have won either of the two prizes has been a translation from another language. Although the Caine is open to translated short stories, Attree (2013) admits that the organisation receives very few stories in translation (37). She acknowledges that most of the stories submitted to the Caine competition are usually originally published in English. The significance of the English language has also been foregrounded by the Commonwealth prize whose submission requirements ensure that only writers from the Commonwealth Nations are eligible candidates for the prize; a rather incongruous condition seeing that only 18 out of 55 African countries are members of the Commonwealth.

The strict language requirements and the framing of the African writer from the lenses of the Commonwealth Nations have contributed to literary exclusion for non-Anglophone African writers, marginalising those who publish in other languages and those whose colonial history

[29] It is important to note here that organisers of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize have since 2016 revised the language requirements to include short stories written in Kiswahili, Bengali and Portuguese languages.

is not liked to Britain. In this regard, international award industries, acting as the main gatekeepers of knowledge in African literature, continue to canonise works by Anglophone and diasporic writers at the expense of local writers publishing in African and other European languages. The exclusion of writers based on language of literary expression, or in particular, the use of English, which is a reflection of the history of colonialism, has meant that publications in other languages like Arabic, Yoruba, Shona, Zulu and others continue to be neglected.

Although it is difficult to establish just how geographically representative the number of short story entries are, the shortlists and winners from both prizes serve as an indication that only a few countries are presented in these prizes, with Nigeria and South Africa once again taking the lead: hardly surprising, considering the high investment in symbolic, economic and cultural capital in the publication as well as the prize industry in both countries compared to other African nations. Caine Prize administrator, Attree, is of the opinion that one of the reasons why only certain countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa, continue to dominate in the CP is because there are more stories submitted from these regions in comparison to, say Sudan or Angola, etc. For instance, as Attree (2013) points out in "The Caine Prize and Contemporary African Writing", only a small number of entries are usually received from North Africa. She elaborates that since the prize's inception in 2000 to 2012, the total numbers of participants from North Africa included 13 for Sudan, eight for Egypt and five for Ethiopia. Morocco and Tunisia have submitted four stories each; three have been received from Algeria, and two from Somalia. Eritrea and Libya have competed with only one story each since 2000 (45). This number of submissions is very small considering that each year about 100 to150 stories are received from all over Africa.

Writing in "Discourses and Disciplines", Yomi Olusegun-Joseph sums up the problem of the continued exclusion of the northern region noting that, "[t]he predominant exclusion of North Africa from the annals of African literature in African literary criticism is to a great extent based on two major assumptions: that this region is not a part of the 'Black Africa' and that its cosmic frame of reference is Arab-Islamic" (222). Indeed, one of the reasons Attree (2013) gives for the continued absence of North African writers from the Caine is that most of these writers publish works in Arabic which are then entered for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF). IPAF is an annual literary prize supported by the Booker Prize Foundation in London and funded by the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Just as the Caine is referred to as the African Booker, the IPAF, launched in

2007, is also regarded as the Arabic Booker. For most North African writers who are excluded from the major African literary awards by language, the Arabic prizes such as the IPAF provide the needed literary authentication and canonisation.

This observation bears on the concrete barrier that the Sahara has always been in Africa – a barrier creating a rift between these two regions of the same continent in economic, political and social contexts. Olusegun-Joseph argues further that "the categorisation of excluding North Africa had been well orchestrated through the colonial enterprise that ensured not only the racialised othering of Africa, but also the racialised balkanization of the continent with a especial Orientalist intention against its Arab(ised) elements" (222). Although the racial distinction is no longer explicit, Zaid Bentahar concludes in "Continental Drift" that this is "nevertheless at the root of partitions in African literatures, in part due to the importance of Negritude in African literary scholarship" (3). What these critics confirm is that North Africa has always been excluded from African writing since colonial times; a trend that might very well continue into the future. However, without the representation of these writers in the different international awards for African writing, e.g. the Caine or the Commonwealth, the colonial, racial, geographical, political, as well as the language categorisations will persist and not one award can claim to be really representative of African writing.

While the two award competitions define themselves as 'African literary prizes', the language and political policies discussed above demonstrate the unrepresentativeness of these award bodies. I argue that the language policy and the postcolonial history weaved into these award bodies that are managed in Britain for Africa has significantly contributed to the production of literary taste. The use of English as the medium for cultural production not only reflects the history of colonial domination but it also emphasises the role that the language continues to play in cultural production and literary taste management.

The recently established Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature is fashioned around language as a major influence in African cultural production. The prize seeks to award "excellent writing in African languages and encourage[s…] translation from, between and into African languages" (cornell.edu, "Kiswahili prize", n.d). The prize was co-founded by Mukoma wa Ngugi and Caine Prize Director Lizzy Attree and among its board members and trustees is renowned African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o. This prize has therefore gained from the symbolic capital of the Caine as well as from that of wa Thiong'o who has tirelessly campaigned for African literature written in African languages, a struggle that has been

echoed in his son, Mukoma wa Ngugi, who lectures at Cornell University. Recalling the debate on the use of English by the African writer, wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind* (1987) argues from a postcolonial perspective that the language of African literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social and colonial forces which have made it. Chinua Achebe, on the other hand, argues that the African writer must learn to adopt and appropriate the inherited languages in order to reach a wider audience (Achebe 2010). But as Dennis Walder demonstrates in *Post-colonial Literatures in English* (1998), Achebe's defence of the employment of English language to convey African stories also makes "assumptions that his audience is an international one" adding that, "[w]ithout some kind of market, literature cannot exist; and many writers have had to address English-speakers and readers rather than 'traditional' indigenous audiences simply in order to get published, and to this extent inevitably become cut off from their own literary and cultural roots" (52-3). Each year, the winning entries from the Mabati-Cornell prize will be published in Kiswahili by the East African Educational Publishers, but the best poetry book will be translated and published in English by the Africa Poetry Book Fund.

A new prize launched in Kenya in 2015 named Tuzo ya Fasihi ya Ubunifu Kiswahili Literary Award also follows the same goals as the Mabati-Cornell prize. The Ubunifu Prize seeks to award novels written in Kiswahili with a cash reward value of Ksh1,000,000 ($10,000) for unpublished manuscripts. The prize is co-funded by the Embassy of France in Kenya and a local publisher – Spotlight Publishers. The prize aims to promote Kiswahili language. However, the winning entries will also be translated into French. Such award institutions that operate on a platform of promoting African languages, but nonetheless require translations into European languages, raise more questions concerning the sustainability of a prize that is based entirely on African languages, confirming that the choice of language for a writer or publisher depends on different factors entangled with the cultural and literary industry at large.

Conclusion

In the literary marketplace the system of cultural production and the different factors that influence the taste and management of a prize are reflected in the content of the texts. The short stories for the CP as well as the CWSSP are highly influenced or dependent on the material conditions of the stories' production and consumption. As English (2005) asserts,

"[t]here is no evading the social and political freight of a global award at a time when global markets determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies" (298). This chapter provides a background study to the centrality of literary awards in the literary and cultural industry. It sought to explore the different cultural players that participate in the production of literary taste for a literary award, noting that prizes act as consumers' guides for readers by ascribing taste to a literary text. However, as the chapter establishes, there are no universally recognised measures to determine the superiority of one piece of writing from another. Each award organisation and jury is influenced by different social, economic and political realities that lead to the privileging of certain literary works over others. This chapter looks at these realities as the major taste makers that dictate the consumption of contemporary African literature, especially within the Caine and Commonwealth prizes' frame. I have focused on the different factors that influence the taste of a prize to demonstrate that the production of a literary culture is always determined by the social, political and economic factors framing its existence. The chapter foregrounds the different roles played by writers, prize judges, publishers, academic institutions, funding organisations, the media as well as the prize institutions in literary production noting that for a prize to achieve international prestige and consequently the authority to confer international literary value, it has to find a balance between its symbolic, cultural and economic capital.

The emphasis on this chapter is on the important role played by funding organisations in literary awards, especially internationally recognised awards, in the production of literary culture. It has explored the interactions between the producers and consumers of the literary text and the effects of this interaction on writers and their creative imaginings, concluding that African writing has to work within the limitations of external influence mainly caused by economic dependency. African writers have to find a way to navigate around the stifling circumstances surrounding literary production with limited economical capital. The next chapter will focus on African literary journals and magazines and their interaction with the award industry in a process aiming at promoting local production of literary culture. It will discuss the history of print cultures in Africa, linking economic dependency in publishing institutions with the contemporary award industry and its effect on literature.

CHAPTER 3

African Print Cultures and the Award Industry

Introduction

The literary prize industry is intrinsically linked to the print cultures of a region and this chapter focuses on the nature of these print cultures in the African literary and cultural market and their relationship with award institutions. This chapter explores the circulation of value in the literary market by investigating the interlinkages between African literary journals and magazines and the international literary award institutions. I seek to shed light on the underlying nature of the international literary award for African writing by expanding on the idea of African literary print cultures to focus on the social, political, economic and historical contexts that have helped to sculpt the prize industry, paying particular attention to literary and cultural journals and magazines. I further elaborate on the role of the publishing sector, introduced in the previous chapter, in the production and consumption of literary and cultural value. The aim of the chapter is to explain the link between print cultures and award institutions in contemporary African literary and cultural production, investigating how these literary organisations participate in placing contemporary African literature in the global literary marketplace. The chapter engages further with literary establishments to investigate how various literary institutions continue to reflect as well as influence literary production in Africa, affirming Pascale Casanova's (1999) argument that

> [a] literary work can be deciphered only on the basis of the whole of the composition, for its rediscovered coherence stands revealed only in relation to the entire literary university of which it is part. The singularity of individual literary works therefore becomes manifest only against the background of the overall structure in which they take their place. (3)

The chapter, therefore, attempts to place the literary text within the mechanisms of its production by examining the various structures that frame the literary publication scene on the continent. The discussion in this chapter borrows from John Guillory's (1993) ideas on the canon in which he argues that the process of canonisation is directly influenced by the distribution of, or the access to, the means of literary production. While the awarding of value

to a text through the literary prize industry involves selection and exclusion in which some texts and authors are foregrounded in the literary market, John Guillory (1990) notes that literary canon formation is not necessarily defined by a rigorous process of exclusion and inclusion, arguing for the need to "reconstruct a historical picture of how literary works are produced, disseminated, reproduced, reread, and retaught over successive generations and eras" (238). In this regard, this dissertation examines the structures of African literary production by paying close attention to the intersection between award bodies and literary journals and magazines to explain how they contribute to canonisation of literature.

A discussion of African print cultures must foreground the important role that literary periodicals have historically played in the production of African literary culture from the pre-colonial setting to the present day. One of the main issues raised in the previous chapter with regard to publishing in Africa is the material reality of an impoverished publishing industry. Mainstream publishers have had to contend with constricting government policies, lack of funding and an uneven market. Creative writers have been affected most by the poor publishing sector because the profit oriented publishers on the continent continue to focus on school texts which are more marketable. In this chapter I will begin by providing a background of publishing in Africa, giving a wide overview of the history of print cultures in Africa. The broad historical background aims to foreground the central role of contemporary African literary and cultural journal as a major response to a weak mainstream publishing sector.

By examining the structures of the African print cultures, this chapter aligns itself with Walter Benjamin's (1934) remarks that before asking "what is a work's position *vis-à-vis* the production relations of its time", it is imperative to first ask, "what is its position *within* them?" (87). Benjamin (1934) observes that the literary text is a form of both economic and social activity which must exist alongside and interrelate with other such forms. He calls attention not only to the writer but to the means of production that mediates the movement of a work of art from author to audience. He argues that the truly revolutionary artist is not concerned with the commodity alone but with the means of its production.

The chapter will further foreground the link between funding organisations and literary production in Africa demonstrating the influence of economic dependency on local print cultures. It argues that lack of economic and political dependency in the publishing sector has significantly contributed towards the production of a literature coloured by patronage. The

chapter further argues that these literary journals and magazines are not only taking over the role of literary canonisation from the mainstream literary institutions such as the universities, publishers and international award bodies, they are also consolidating their position as major players in the African literary and cultural field. It demonstrates the different ways in which African writers have learnt to align themselves within these structures of literary patronage, imposed through economic funding and political censorship to literary magazines, journals and prizes, aiming to strategically place themselves at the global literary marketplace.

Tracing the history of literary publishing in Africa

Book publishing in Africa traces its roots back to pre-colonial times when the significant part of book production was based on religious manuscripts, especially Islamic religious texts (Bgoya and Jay, 2013). Religious publications continued to flourish during the early nineteenth century and into the twentieth century through the publication of Christian texts supported by the missionaries. However, as Milton Krieger (2004) explains in "The Formative Journals and Institutions", publications by European mission churches included more than religious texts. The church engaged in publishing "oral narratives and some secular poetry and prose as adjuncts to religious texts" (398).

Mainstream and commercial publishing flourished during the colonial era and heralded the sprouting of Western publishers' branches in different parts of Africa where it was deemed economically viable. The foreign publishers were, however, not keen on publishing local content, but rather took the opportunity to market Western-produced books. Most of these were textbooks and religious manuscripts with only a few literary publications. The main goal at this time was to promote literacy rather than to offer 'leisure reading'. The Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS), established in 1962, was a welcome project for it provided an opportunity for African writers to tell their own stories, despite the fact that the writers still had to tell these stories within the confines of the Western publisher's requirements. Writing about the AWS, Peter J. Kalliney in *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics* (2013) notes the educational nature of the series as well as its paternalist stance with the books "intended exclusively for the African market" (280). In addition, Oxford University Press' efforts to "consolidate […] publishing empires in the postcolonial period" saw the launch of the Oxford Three Crowns Series (Davis 2005, 228). However, as Caroline Davis (2005) further recalls,

> African literature was […] introduced to Three Crowns in 1962 undoubtedly due to the enthusiasm of a few individuals for African writing but also to serve an important public relations purpose. Three Crowns was initially established in 1961 as an eclectic list, offering possibilities for publication to British expatriates writing about Africa. (234)

The history of literary publishing in Africa has hence always been framed through the lenses of different kinds of patronage. Mapping the development of publishing in Africa in "The Politics of Postcolonial Publishing", Davis explains that "[t]he end of formal colonization in Africa gave British publishing companies the opportunity to become more, not less, deeply entrenched in the cultural life of the continent" (228). In the article, published in the journal *Book History*, Davis gives an example of the rise of Oxford University Press (OUP) as a major publishing institution in the newly independent African Nations. She observes that "[n]ew offices were established by OUP" in different parts of the continent adding that "as African nations achieved political independence in the early 1960s, OUP sales offices throughout Africa were converted to publishing branches" (228). In this manner, therefore, while African countries were achieving political independence, their literary and cultural sector was still facing economic and cultural domination through the international publishing institutions. Discussing Heinemann publishers in *The Literature Police* (2009), Peter D. McDonald acknowledges that the African Writers Series "was the most successful attempt by a major colonial educational publisher to reinvent itself as a post-colonial African literary imprint, partly as a public relations exercise, partly to consolidate its share of the market" (110).

Despite the impressive beginnings of the publishing industry in Africa, there has been a steady decline since independence. This slow growth and the subsequent gradual collapse of the sector could be attributed to political patronage of the publishing industry in Africa. Soon after independence, as Walter Bgoya and Mary Jay in "Publishing in Africa from Independence to the Present Day" explain, there was a takeover of the major publishing industries by the different respective governments on the continent. Following the official end of colonialism, African governments were committed to eradicating poverty, disease and illiteracy, and significant funds were directed towards the publishing sector to ensure that literacy levels increased. However, despite the governments' declarations, there was lack of commitment to promoting cultural production through literature. Just like their colonial predecessors, governments in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Congo were

more concerned with the publication of textbooks as the only means to eradicate illiteracy and promote growth in their respective countries. Bgoya and Jay note that after independence,

> African governments, preoccupied mostly with economic development, gave little or no support to modern cultural industries, interpreting culture primarily as folklore and dancing to entertain government and political party leaders or visiting dignitaries. Legislation for development of authors and publishers' rights was inadequate, with weak copyright law and enforcement. Government policies were regressive, for example, imposing duties and taxes on book manufacturing materials — paper primarily, but also other consumables for printing machinery, such as spare parts, inks, dyes, chemicals, films, and plates. In addition, there were insufficient training centers for the staff needed in the publishing and printing industries. (19)

The economic downturn that came a few decades after independence did not help the growth of this sector either. This period saw the subsequent collapse of government-owned publishers and many countries have since then experienced a major decline in local publications, especially with non-textbooks. Writing in the early 1990s, Hans M. Zell in "Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge" notes that the development of the publishing sector was not uniform in the entire continent. He writes that while some governments' takeover of the publishing industry led to a decline in this sector, there are a few cases where "more enlightened government attitudes may be found" (371). Zell gives examples of Francophone West Africa where different governments "jointly set up Les Nouvelles Editions of Africaines, *albeit with French interests*", adding that "Nouvelles Editions of Africaines is now a major force in all areas of publishing, with a massive and impressive list" (371, my emphasis). Les Nouvelles Editions of Africaines was founded in 1972 as a joint undertaking of the governments of Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Togo. The influence of the French government in the establishment and running of this African publishing institution is not to be ignored for it meant that the publishers were not fully independent from the former colonial masters.

J.R. Ikoja-Odongo argues in *Publishing in Uganda with Notes from Africa* (2008) that the majority of African publishers are involved in textbook production because it is the bread and butter of publishing (71). The heavy reliance on textbook publishing in Africa partly answers the question why a large percentage of the stories submitted for the Caine Prize are usually

from foreign publications. It also supports Zell's sentiments in "Publishing in Africa: Where are we Now?" that "[p]ublishing and book development in Africa have always been, and will continue to be, closely influenced by development in general" and that the publishing sector in any country "is inescapably tied to government policies or, in many countries, the lack of policies" (188).

This industry has also been severely hindered by the fact that, after the collapse of most government owned publishers, private publishing has been dominated mostly by foreign companies that spend the profits from textbooks out of the country where profits were earned. Sarah Brouillette in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) notes that "more than 50 per cent of the [global] publishing is run by between five and seven encompassing firms that on average make US$ 500 million a year" (53). These firms' domination ensures that there is almost no income left for those thousands of smaller companies remaining. Francis Nyamnjoh adds, in "Globalization and the Cultural Economy", that African publishing "contributes a meagre three per cent to the total world publication output and is heavily dependent on school text books and donor-driven book procurement programs" (127). As is the case in many publishing houses, the profit made from the more lucrative textbook publishing is usually ploughed back into the industry to help publish literary works for cultural development. Bgoya and Jay write that "[t]he traditional model of publishing industries in the developed world is that the profits made from textbook publishing for schools and tertiary institutions are partly invested in publishing for the wider market, particularly scholarly titles and literary and children's books for the general consumer market" (22). And, as Brouillette notes, the parent company may retain control of the running of the publishing firm but the profit should circulate within the local market (53). However, this fails to work in the African publishing sector because most of the foreign owned firms reinvest the profits outside the continent. Nyamnjoh decries that the main profits are never invested in promoting the local cultural economy. He observes:

> Although African publishing is heavily reliant on school textbooks, the lion's share of subventions for and business in such projects goes directly to multinational publishers or their local affiliates. Yet these multinational publishers are less keen on investing some of the profit made into developing the local publishing industry, local content and/or promoting publishing in local languages. (132)

While multinational organisations have failed to invest the capital back into the African publishing sector, the local and independent private publishers have not done much better, either. They have also developed a preference for the more marketable textbook industry and little if any money is set aside for literary publishing. The difficulties associated with access to mainstream publishing institutions for creative writers has resulted in an overreliance on international publishers as well as on literary and cultural magazines as major avenues for literary work.

The nature of magazine and journal publications has ensured the foregrounding of short stories and poetry at the expense of longer works of fiction such as novels, a fact that has been clearly reflected in the literary prize industry. This is evidenced by the high number of short stories initially published in magazines and journals and which eventually make it to the literary awards' shortlists. Writing about American Black literary journals, Kendra Hamilton (2013), in "Writers' Retreat", notes that there have been fewer and fewer outlets in mainstream publishing for creative arts and this has forced more writers to rely on literary journals as a major validating agency. The dearth of publishers for creative work has led to the emergent of literary journals to counter the mainstream publishers or to achieve what the mainstream institutions have failed to do. In this regard, it becomes imperative to examine the central role that cultural and literary magazines have historically played in the production of African literary culture.

The formative literary institutions and journals in Africa

Historically, cultural journals have dominated in African cultural production not only as producers of value but also as avenues for social, cultural and political commentary. Discussing the history of African and Caribbean cultural journals and institutions, Milton Krieger links the establishment of these periodicals to "the black world's urgent public issues" (398). Many of these periodicals started in the colonial era and provided an opportunity for African writers to address issues such as political domination and cultural changes that were taking place on the continent. As Peter Benson (1986) writes in his extensive study of the relationship between literary magazines and intellectual and cultural movements, the formative journals in Africa provided the new cultural and intellectual movements with vehicles of expression and communication (12). The writers depended on

the journals and magazines to comment on the status of the nation and culture, even with the absence of a strong and independent mainstream publishing sector.

Some of the earliest journals in Africa were founded in academic institutions or as offshoots of cultural organisations. In East Africa, Makerere University played a vital role in cultural production between the 1950s and 1970s by providing different avenues of expression, evident in its student journals such as *Penpoint*, *Dhana*, *Busara* and *Jolisto.* These journals contributed to shaping the literary careers of many of the East African writers of that era, including David Rubadiri, Peter Nazareth and Ngugi wa Thiong'o who later established the Kamirithu Theatre Group in Kenya to raise political awareness among the people.[30] The influence of the university setting was also replicated in West Africa where the Mbari Cultural Centre was founded in Nigeria by expatriate extramural lecturer, Ulli Beier, at Ibadan University (then University College, Nigeria). From Mbari came the literary journal *Black Orpheus,* edited by Beier from 1957. The Mbari Centre became a major tool for cultural production not only in Nigeria but in Africa as a whole through the periodical *Black Orpheus*. The birth of these literary and cultural organisations and journals within university settings in Africa further foregrounds the important role that the academy has historically played in the production of cultural value on the continent.

Among the most prominent of these foundational magazines and journals in Africa were *Transition* in Uganda, *Black Orpheus* in Nigeria and *Drum* in South Africa. There were other literary and cultural journals that appeared during the 1950s to 1970s and beyond. However, as Benson argues in his book, *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Cultural Awakening in Africa* (1986), "[o]ther cultural and intellectual journals appeared (often rather briefly) in Africa during the period between 1957 and 1978, but Nigeria's *Black Orpheus* and Uganda's (later Ghana's) *Transition* were the most important to the intellectual history of that time and place" (1). These journals and magazines arose not only to challenge the social and political status quo at the time but to introduce an alternative avenue to publishing which was by then dominated by international organisations.

The writers who contributed to these magazines belonged to a new generation of educated Africans who felt that the available avenues for political and cultural commentary were insufficient or unavailable. The Paris-based cultural journal, *Présence Africaine*, played a

[30] See Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1987).

major role in the establishment of African cultural and literary magazines in pre- and post-independent eras. The impact of this magazine must be understood within the wider framework of Paris as an important cultural melting pot for the broader black diaspora especially after the First World War. Writing in *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003), Brent Hayes Edwards argues that the European metropole "provided a special sort of vibrant, cosmopolitan space for interaction that was available neither in the United States nor in the colonies" (4). The significance of Paris as a cultural point for black internationalism and cultural production also raises the contradiction of the fact that while it "allowed boundary crossing, conversations, and collaborations" among the larger African diaspora, this was all happening at the height of French colonial domination in Africa and the Caribbean (Edwards 4).

Krieger explains that *Présence Africaine* was founded in 1947 by Senegal's Alioune Diop and was highly involved in the Pan-Africanist movement, taking a central role in the birth of the Negritude movement. The magazine's contents focused mainly on decolonisation struggles from the French colony. Many colonial era African journals and magazines were linked to and influenced by *Présence Africaine* – not only because the magazine raised the profile of African writers in France, but also because it provided a platform for challenging political domination at a time when most of the continent was facing colonisation. Krieger notes that although writers of African descent were previously featured in the magazine as creative artists, their criticism and commentary flourished as the magazine continued to grow. He adds that the impact of the magazine "spread to Africa when *Présence Africaine* collaborators, now familiar with publishing conventions and production techniques, returned to independent homelands, started journals, and organized festivals of culture" (400). He adds that they also "expanded local print opportunities and fostered experimental cultures and resistant politics" (400). The influence of politics on the print cultures therefore cannot be overstated.

Ulli Beier admits that he was heavily influenced by the Paris-based African magazine, *Présence Africaine* (Benson 22-3; Krieger 401; Lindfors 23-4). Establishing *Black Orpheus* through the Mbari Centre, Beier aimed at creating a similar journal based in Africa with an initial goal of enlightening the readers about the larger African Diaspora. As both Benson and Krieger note, Beier was 'impressed' by the literary movement that had grown up around *Présence Africaine* and this was reflected by the fact that *Black Orpheus* started by translating into English some of the earlier French speaking writers like Leopold Sedar

Sengor, Aimee Césaire, David Diop and Tchicaya U Tam'si, whose work had originally been published by *Présence Africaine*. However, as the *Black Orpheus* magazine grew, it begun to publish more local writers in English.

The influence of *Black Orpheus* also resulted in the founding of a similar journal in East Africa, *Transition.* The latter was founded in 1961 by a member of the Ugandan elite, Rajat Neogy, who had come back to Kampala after his studies in Britain. Benson argues that the modelling of *Transition* on the values and format of *Black Orpheus* "was meant perhaps to signal continuity – to identify *Transition* in some manner as the East African *Black Orpheus*" (108). While Neogy started by publishing creative works and literary criticism, the journal soon turned into what Benson calls "controversies" (123, 132). In general *Transition* soon became a powerful tool for questioning poor political leadership in Uganda and in Africa in general. Indeed, as Neogy wrote in *Transition* 24 (1966), magazines are mirrors used to reflect the cultures and societies in which they are based. He added: "Magazines are also like cultures: they are progressive, conservative, radical, puritanical, slow moving, or vigorous. At their most aware, they reflect the qualities or weaknesses of their societies; at their blindest, they are showcases for the imbecilities of their editors" (Neogy 18).

In South Africa, writers had to deal not only with the realities of an impoverished publishing industry but also had to confront apartheid censorship that monopolised control of the publishing sector. *Drum* magazine, established in 1951 by Jim Bailey, an entrepreneur, targeted urbanised black readership in South Africa (McDonald 118). Many South African black writers were launched into the literary field through *Drum* whose pages covered "resistance politics […] novels in serial form […] photographs […] Popular elements like opinion polls, an African heroes series, cooking and farming tips, comics and cartoons, sports, show business, and 'soft' sex texts and photographs (observing racial bars)" (Krieger, 404). "The Drum Decade", as the 1950s South African Black, English literary period has been aptly referred to by Michael Chapman (1989), contributed significantly in the production and consumption of culture not only in the Southern African region but in the entire continent. The establishment of *The Drum* literary magazine provided an opportunity for a new generation of South African black writers in English to talk about the political, cultural and economic conditions of their lives under the apartheid regime. It is, however, important to note that there were other literary and cultural magazines in Southern Africa operating during the same period as *Drum* and which had a wider circulation aiming to form a pan African identity with links to the larger African diaspora. For instance, as Tsitsi Ella

Jaji notes in *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan African Identity* (2014), the South African magazine, *Zonk!: African People's Pictorial,* which began publishing in 1949 was mainly a pictorial of African people and although it stayed away from overt political commentary, the positive representation of people of African descent on the magazine's pages provided an opportunity for the South African black community to imagine "possibilities at odds with the increasingly restricted material and political conditions enforced under the new government's policy of apartheid" (113).

Most of these cultural and literary journals aimed at similar goals, initially, and also shared cultural and symbolic power in the sense that some materials, editors and writers operated freely between the journals. For example, Soyinka was a contributor to and also co-editor of the journal, *Black Orpheus.* Later he took over as the editor of *Transition,* after Neogy, in 1973; Es'kia Mphahlele wrote for the *Drum, Transition* and also for the *Black Orpheus*. Mphahlele was also co-editor of *Black Orpheus* (1960-1964) in addition to being founder and director of the Nairobi-based cultural centre for artists and writers, Chemichemi (1963–65).

In general, these formative journals contributed significantly to shaping literary and cultural production in Africa during that historical period and influenced critical discourse on every aspect of African condition both locally and globally. For instance, as Benson notes, "African artists, writers, and intellectuals who came into prominence from the late fifties to the late sixties were all profoundly influenced by *Black Orpheus*" (20). Some of the major names from Africa that came to the international literary limelight during the 1950s and 1960s were initially canonised by these magazines and journals and include Peter Abrahams, Alex la Guma, Es'kia Mphahlele, Richard Rive, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark and D.O. Fanugwa. Lindfors writes of *Black Orpheus*: "The achievements of […upcoming writers] were carefully assessed in individual essays and the salient features of Nigerian market chapbooks were described […] There were surveys of South African fiction, Anglophone African poetry and Southern Bantu literature, as well as thematic articles" (30). In the absence of other major institutions of canon formation like the international prize, the journals, therefore, became the major agents of canonisation for African writers. In fact, a year after its launch, *Drum* started to sponsor an annual short story competition with a first prize of fifty pounds, thereby becoming a major institution of literary production and consecration. Magazines like *Black Orpheus*, *Drum,* and *Transition* not only served to publish new writers, they also participated in the assessing of literary value and canonising African literature.

Economic dependency and the crisis of integrity

Despite the significant role played by local literary and cultural organisations, it is important to note that this role is always framed within the economic, social and political contexts of production, thereby asserting Sarah Brouillette and David Finkelstein's hypothesis that "[t]he nature of the postcolonial text is illuminated by study of cultural markets and the economic and political forces that those markers mediate" (3). Despite the huge impact of the journals in promoting publishing in Africa and contributing significantly to cultural and literary growth, they reached their peak in the sixties and soon after closed down due to economic and political sanctions. The decline of these formative journals in African cultural and literary industry, Zell argues in "The Crisis and the Challenge", is a confirmation that periodicals "tend to live a precarious existence" (384). While *Drum* stopped publication due to political censorship and oppression from the apartheid government, *Black Orpheus*'s gradual decline was as a result of several factors including lack of funding and the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 (Benson 79-84; McDonald 123; Strauhs 77). The Kampala based *Transition* was banned in 1968 when its founder and editor, Rajat Neogy, was accused of sedition against the then Prime Minister of Uganda, Milton Obote, and imprisoned for six months (Benson 178-189).

Historically, cultural organisations have relied on different funding organisations for their day to day running. The decline of these journals and their respective literary organisations started with the revelation of funding from the CIA, through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). McDonald (2009) explains the economic reliance of new journals established in South Africa after *Drum* was banned in the early 1960s:

> To remain viable the new periodicals had to rely on *patronage* and, as many enterprising editors throughout the world discovered in the 1950s and 1960s, the Americans were among the most active and obliging patrons of literature and the arts at the time. Like many notable contemporary literary periodicals, including *Encounter* in Britain, *Black Orpheus* in Nigeria, and *Transition* in Uganda, Jack Cope's *Contrast* (1960–89), Randolph Vigne's *The New African* (1962–8), and Nat Nakasa's *The Classic* (1963–71) were all initially sponsored to varying degrees by the Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF) or the Fairfield Foundation, which was, along with the Ford Foundation, one of the CCF's principal backers. (123)

Transition magazine was banned in Uganda when its founder, Rajat Neogy, was arrested for criticizing the government. But as Strauhs explains, "the reason for Neogy's imprisonment in 1968 was rather due to the fact that his reputation in Uganda had already been shaken a year before, when it was revealed that the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) [… was] sponsoring *Transition*" (77). Strauhs also links the decline and eventual death of *Black Orpheus* to the financial sponsorship by the CIA. She further expounds: "[t]he news of the CIA behind the CCF funding also affected Mbari in the same year, leading to a conflict between Beier and his Nigerian colleagues Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark over the future of Mbari and the continuation of the LINGO through other funding" (77).[31]

The link between the CIA and the formative literary magazines in Africa was mainly facilitated through the CCF's close connections with major cultural and intellectual leaders. McDonald explains that

> As part of its effort to expand its involvement in Africa, where it already had connections with Ulli Beier, the leading German-born Africanist, who founded Mbari in Nigeria, the CCF appointed Mphahlele in 1961, on Beier's recommendation, to act as director of its Africa programme and, among other things, to help identify which periodicals would be worth supporting. (123-126)

The funding from the CIA extended to not only the literary magazines but to other cultural organisations like Mbari in Nigeria and Chemichemi in Kenya. The funds were also directed to "writers' conferences such as those in Kampala (1962) the literary conferences in Dakar and Freetown (1963), seminars on African university education and economics and politics" (Mphahlele 5) as well as several other gatherings "relating to African cultural and social matters whose proceedings resulted in books" (Neogy 313). As Peter Benson argues, the CIA's funding of cultural institutions was driven by "the related efforts to infiltrate liberal intellectual circles" through to all the major institutions of cultural production (160).

However, Mphahlele and Rajat claimed after the revelation of the CIA funding that the cultural production function carried out by the magazines was not influenced by any external force and that the magazines were independent of any cultural or political influences. In an interview with Kenyan journalist Tony Hall in 1967, reprinted in *Transition* 34, Neogy insisted on the magazine's independence from the influences of the CIA. He argued that:

[31] Doreen Strauhs (2013) defines LINGO as "a nongovernmental organization with a focus on the production and promotion of literary talent, events, and publications that is situated in the nonprofit sector" (22).

> I did not ever feel there were any influences getting at me over policy matters of the magazine. The whole point of our relationship with the Congress [CCF] was that, over the years, they had never once tried to tell us, either directly or in other ways, what to print. (Neogy 312)[32]

Although magazines such as *Transition* could claim that its production was not influenced by the funding organisation, the fact remained that CCF "financed periodicals it identified as being broadly sympathetic to its aims" (McDonald 126). Edward Shills, one of the key figures in the CCF wrote in *The Intellectuals and the Powers* (1972) that the main goal behind the patronage of cultural production was to "weaken" the people's "revolt against Western values" (480). The CCF was established by a leading group of American and European intellectuals in 1950 and "it set out to create an elite worldwide liberal alliance that would promote Western ideas of culture and act as a bulwark against communism and the broader threat of totalitarianism" (McDonald 123). Giles Scott-Smith explains that the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which later changed its name to International Association for Cultural Freedom (after the revelations of its association with the CIA) was "an institution that fostered an international anti-communist consensus amongst intellectuals during the Cold War" and which "represent[ed] a fascinating meeting-point between politics and culture, or, more broadly, between power and ideals" (437).

The relationship between funding bodies and earlier post-independent literary and cultural organisations point to an imbalanced power structure maintained by economic dependence and patronage. Scott-Smith in "The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference" further argues that the CCF's "links with the CIA have led some observers to disparage it as little more than a tool of US foreign policy, its intellectual-cultural interests being regarded as a smokescreen for an underlying 'politics of control'" (437). In general, therefore, lack of financial independence exposes literary organisations to different kinds of political and cultural control and this is reflected in the literature it produces. The influence of the social, economic and political fields on the creative works produced by these local literary organisations is a demonstration that, "literary works are produced in a particular social universe endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws" (Bourdieu, *The Field* 163).

[32] This interview first appeared in the Kenyan newspaper, *Sunday Nation*, on June 11, 1967.

Contemporary literary journals: the rebirth of Abiku

Like Abiku, the spirit child in Yoruba myth who dies and returns again and again, African literary and cultural journals continue to be born and reborn in different parts of the continent and the world at large. Many new journals are established each year but few survive the first few issues. The case is no different in 2016 than it was in the 1950s to 1970s. In South Africa, for instance, *Drum* was followed by numerous other literary and cultural magazines that sought to fill the gap left by *Drum*. As McDonalds explains, "[d]espite the government clampdown during the emergency period in the early 1960s, a series of new periodicals emerged that attempted to pick up and reshape the cultural remnants of the previous decade" (123). Some of *Drum*'s predecessors in South Africa included *Staffrider*, *Standpunte*, the *Purple Renoster*, *Ophir*, *Izwi* and *Bolt* magazines, "most of which emanated from university English departments", further confirming the important role the university continues to play in literary production (McDonald 129).

After *Transition* was banned in Uganda and its editor jailed, the magazine was reborn in Ghana in 1970 soon after Neogy's release from prison. In Accra, *Transition* resumed publication with Neogy as editor until 1973 when he moved to the US and Soyinka took over editorship of the magazine. Soyinka continued to publish the magazine until 1974 when the name changed to *Chindaba*. The magazine finally closed down in 1976 due to lack of funding. It was later revived in the US in 1991 as a publication of the Hutchins Centre at Harvard University and continues to publish creative works, political commentaries, art and cultural criticism in an effort "to make *Transition* a pivotal medium for discussion of the global predicament of the African Diaspora in an age that demands ceaseless improvisation" (Hutchins Centre, "Editorial Mission", n.d). The new *Transition* magazine continues with Neogy's tradition of publishing new and unknown writers and also provides a space for literary criticism. Among the new *Transition*'s editorial board is Soyinka, who serves as the chairman of the board. In this way, the new *Transition* continues to benefit from the cultural and symbolic value of the earlier journal. Under the management of Harvard University, the new journal has continued to bring writers and critics from different parts of the world to the international literary marketplace. It has also continued to engage in the marketing of African literature through its annual short story submissions to the CP.

The symbolic power afforded by the formative African literary and cultural periodicals is still evident in post-2000 literary scene. As mentioned, many of the earlier literary journals and magazines were forced to close down in the 1970s due to lack of funding or due to political

repressions. These formative journals and magazines were however revived later in the 1990s and in new millennium and, although not entirely modelled on the earlier ones, the objectives have remained similar. The presence of literary magazines and journals has historically provided a space for creative writers and critics to comment on different aspects of social, political and economic concerns. In addition, contemporary journals and magazines aim to provide an avenue for literary expression as well as to act as a social, cultural and political trend commentator.

In the post 2000 African literary scene, the major contemporary literary organisations and journals are based in Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa and Kenya – the same geographical sites where the formative periodicals started. Doreen Strauhs in *African Literary NGOs* (2013) has conducted a comprehensive study of contemporary literary organisations in East Africa and identifies FEMRITE in Uganda and *Kwani?* in Kenya as the major literary periodicals not only in the East African region but on the continent (32). Other notable current literary organisations and periodicals include *Chimurenga* in South Africa, *Farafina* in Nigeria, and *Storymoja* and *Jalada* in Kenya. These organisations are usually established as writers' associations which bring together groups of artists with a common goal. The association with these literary groups and organisations affords the writers a symbolic and cultural value with which they use to gain access to the larger literary market through publications, awards and academic fellowships. As an analysis of the trend in the stories shortlisted for the CP reveals, more than half of the stories are originally published in literary magazines and journals. A significant number of the Caine and Commonwealth prize-winners are also affiliated with different literary associations not only as writers but as editors, contributors or general members.

It is important to add that these literary institutions continue to lean heavily on the cultural and symbolic capital of the previous formative journals like *Transition* and *Black Orpheus* for, as Bourdieu notes, power is founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition (Bourdieu, *The Field* 7). Therefore, in the same way the formative journals of the 1950s and 1960s tapped into transnational intellectual currents such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude writings, I argue that journals like *Kwani*? and *Chimurenga* also rely on the symbolic and cultural capital of the formative institutions. In fact, some of the contemporary journals have inherited the symbolic and cultural power of the earlier generation magazines by adopting not only the same styles and objectives, but the magazine designs as well. Writing about contemporary African literary journals in "*Kwani*? Exploring New Literary

Spaces in Kenya", Dina Ligaga confirms that "*Transition* has contributed to *Kwani*?'s layout, especially as *Transition* allows for the publication of fiction, picture narratives, articles, photography and a host of other artistic forms, widening the scope of what can be published within a literary journal, a style that *Kwani*? visibly adopts" (46).

Kwani? came about as the result of a conscious effort by many Kenyan writers who had grown impatient with mainstream publishers and the difficulties involved in publishing new and unknown writers. In fact, as explained in the *Kwani*? website, over thirty new writers were published in the first five issues of *Kwani*? (Kwani Trust, "our history", n.p). The establishment of this literary organisation was boosted by Binyavanga Wainaina's Caine win in 2002. Wainaina writes in his memoir, *One Day I Will Write About this Place* (2011), that he used part of the money he won to start the literary journal *Kwani?* in Nairobi in 2003. As Grace Musila (2006) acknowledges, the "Caine Prize for Literature has been central in stimulating local writing across the continent" and indeed, "*Kwani*? owes its genesis indirectly to the award" (77). Kwani Trust is one of the foremost literary networks in the East African region and the organisation has also been keen in submitting short stories to the Caine competition each year. As the *Kwani?* managing editor, Billy Kahora, confirmed in a personal interview, the journal has always submitted stories to the annual Caine competition except during the year of post-election violence in Kenya, 2008.[33]

Among the contemporary literary organisations on the continent, Uganda Women Writers' Association (FEMRITE), is arguably the oldest in terms of establishment. It was founded in 1995 by Mary Karooro Okurut with the aim of giving a voice to women writers at a time when "the literary landscape was dominated by male writers" (Femrite Uganda, "Residency", n.p). As Marie Kruger writes in *Women Literature in Kenya and Uganda* (2011), "Kwani Trust in Kenya and FEMRITE have dramatically reshaped the East African literary scene for nearly a decade now" (1). One of the main reasons why these literary organisations have continued to stand out is because of their "nationally and transnationally recognised prize winners" (Strauhs, 32). Writers affiliated with the local literary organisations have gained international recognition by winning major awards like the Caine or the Commonwealth prizes, the *Sunday Times* Barry Ronge Fiction Prize among others. In general, therefore, the literary journal has demonstrated a spirited effort to remain alive in Africa despite facing numerous political and economic challenges. The journal has managed, over different

[33] Personal interview with Billy Kahora by Doseline Kiguru. Cape Town, 20 May 2014.

historical periods, to shape as well as reflect its socio-political and economic environments. The diversity and malleability of the literary journal can thus be attributed to several social, political and economic factors affecting the contemporary society.

In the absence of a powerful mainstream publishing sector, journals have also performed the role of canon formation, validating writers through publications and awards. They have also maintained a link with the prize institutions by story submissions, co-publishing agreements, joint writers' trainings as well as through financial dependence. In general, the process of creating a literary canon, through the contemporary literary journal, involves a complex relationship between the literary organisations, the academy and the awarding institutions. The co-publishing agreements have especially been profitable not only to the writers but to the literary organisations as well for it allows local writers' groups to benefit from the cultural and the monetary value of major literary institutions like the Commonwealth Writers Foundation. As addressed in the previous chapter, the Commonwealth Foundation has partnered with literary journals like *Granta* to publish the winning and shortlisted stories from the CWSSP. The CP has, for several years, been involved in publication of contemporary literature from Africa through the British-based publisher, New Internationalist, as well as through co-publishing agreements with several African publishers – many of which are imprints of local literary organisations and magazines like *Kwani*? and FEMRITE. The two prize organisations are also involved in creative writing programmes in collaboration with these literary organisations, as expounded later in this dissertation.

Donor dependency and contemporary African literature

Cecilia Kimani, in "Publishing in Africa", sums up my major argument in this section by foregrounding the role of patronage in African print cultures. She argues that the "current state of publishing industry in Africa can be analysed according to several broad spheres of engagement [… where the] roles of government, donors and multinationals on the continent are three important areas of concern" (104). For literary and cultural magazines on the continent, political and cultural independence is easier to achieve than economic autonomy since most of these organisations are fully dependent on donor funding. In the absence of financial capital, many of the literary journals and organisations are forced to work within the requirements of the donors, and this has further led to the production of a literature patronised by the international markets and funding organisations. In order to benefit from the donor

funds, institutions of literary and cultural production are faced with two major options. The first option is to seek for donors whose goals are the same as the literary organisation's. The second option is to align the literary organisation's goals to fit within the requirements of the funding body. In any case, it becomes almost impossible to escape the patronage that comes with economic support. As Graham Huggan argues in *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001),

> … the yawning disparity in material conditions of production and consumption between Africa and the post-industrial First World, especially Europe and America [is …] a situation that has led to metropolitan publishers and other related patrons (commercial sponsors, institutionally based reviewers and accreditation agencies, and so on) being granted a virtual stranglehold, not only over the distribution, but also to some extent the definition, of African literature as a cultural field. (35)

Contemporary literary institutions like Kwani Trust, FEMRITE, Farafina Trust, Short Story Day Africa, *Chimurenga*, Storymoja Africa and *Jalada* are also, in different ways, influenced by the prevailing socio-political and economic conditions. The dependence on different funding organisations and the political framing of these organisations, I argue, has influenced the literary output emanating from these regions. The product of this political, cultural and economic patronage is usually presented to the international literary marketplace through the prize industry where the winning works are then classified as "representative" of the cultures from where the writers come from (Brouillette 70). So, how does economic and political patronage influence contemporary literary production through the prize industry?

FEMRITE, one of Uganda's and Africa's foremost literary organisations, has continued to be represented in the prize industry through its publications as well as through the publications of its affiliated writers. It is therefore important to note that the organisation was founded through funds sourced from the Humanistic Institute for Social Development (HIVOS). FEMRITE survived on funds from HIVOS for the first ten years before it was later forced to source for other short term sponsors since 2006. Some of the new sponsors include the DOEN Foundation, the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (both of which are major sponsors of the Caine Prize), the Commonwealth Foundation, and the African Women Development Fund. The influence of the Humanistic Institute for Social Development (HIVOS) is evident in the "humanitarianism and the humanity" of "FEMRITE's true life stories" (Hallemeier, 2014).

Politically, FEMRITE has also been framed by the Ugandan government's policies on gender development and empowerment. As Strauhs notes, "FEMRITE can be said to have been instigated as a direct result of the Uganda women's movement progressing since the assumption of power of Yoweri Museveni in 1986", adding that the literary organisation "owes its emergence to democratic structures legally implemented *within* the autocratic regime" (73). The establishment as well the continued existence of FEMRITE can therefore be partly attributed to its alignment with the Ugandan government's goals in terms of women empowerment and education in the country. In an interview with FEMRITE coordinator, Hilda Twongyeirwe, published in *African Literary NGOs* (2013), Twongyeirwe argues that the organisation has made it its "business to record" the stories of Ugandan women "forced to endure terrible things," and to document and publish experiences of "marginalized women" (87). Indeed, much of the literary works from this organisation, initially headed by Okurut who later became the Minister of Gender and Social Issues before moving to the Ministry of Security in the Ugandan Cabinet, deals with the experiences of women within patriarchal societies and the struggle towards equity especially in light of the civil war in Northern Uganda that has been on-going for more than two decades.

The heavy leaning towards gender empowerment and the archiving of the devastating effects of the civil war is adequately reflected in the Caine and Commonwealth prize winning entries from FEMRITE writers. Some of these stories include Beatrice Lamwakwa's "Butterfly Dreams" which was shortlisted for the CP in 2011. It narrates the experiences of a girl abducted from her family in a village in Northern Uganda and forced to become a child soldier. The short story goes ahead to document the horrors experienced by child soldiers, their families and the society at large. Jackee Budesta Batanda's "Dance with Me" also reports on the civil war in Northern Uganda and the devastating effects on the community in general. "Dance with Me" won the 2003-2004 Commonwealth Short Story Competition and it is a narrative that also relies on the child protagonist who voices the violence of the civil war and the overwhelming effects on the bodies of survivors. The same theme is exploited by Monica Arac de Nyeko in "Strange Fruits", shortlisted for the CP in 2004. It is a story of family disintegration as a result of the war.

As members of an association foregrounding the experiences of women in the society, the writers affiliated with FEMRITE have also foregrounded the female character and her experiences in an effort to frame the narrative within a feminist and nationalist agenda. Even the stories set outside the war zone also employ a gender empowerment lens. Arac de

Nyeko's Caine winning story, "Jambula Tree" (2007), explores the complexities of the life of a young lesbian couple in a society that is not only hostile to sexual difference but also highly patriarchal. The two lovers are forcibly separated through social and cultural mechanisms that aim to discourage same sex relationships. At the end, however, Arac de Nyeko demonstrates the triumph of the two lovers who have managed to keep in touch in their hearts and through letter writing. Doreen Baingana's short story, "Tropical Fish", initially published in an anthology by the writer under the same title and later shortlisted for the 2005 CP, is a story that seeks to deconstruct patriarchal institutions in the framing of women's sexuality and morality.

The influencing factors in FEMRITE publications confirm Casanova's argument regarding the creation of a literary institution within the socio-political landscape of a given region. She is of the opinion that "[t]he construction of national literary space is closely related […] to the political [as well as social] space of the nation that it helps build in turn" (Casanova 85). In this regard, therefore, FEMRITE as a major literary organisation in the East African region has had to deal with both political as well as financial patronage and this has been reflected in its literary production which continues to find its way to major literary prizes thereby contributing to the shaping of literary culture in the region and in the continent. As Strauhs (2013) contends, political and economic commitment in literature can result in "a negative impact on the literary output of a LINGO, for it influences, if not limits, the range of its literary output decisively" (87).

FEMRITE's publications widely reflect the effects of war on a community, especially by exposing the role of violence in gender disparities and this is echoes in literature produced by other magazines and organisations like *Chimurenga* in Southern Africa and *Kwani?* in Kenya which demonstrates that literary production is shaped by the sociocultural and political contexts of these cultural organisations. *Chimurenga* was established in March 2002 at a time when South Africa was experiencing a new political wave following the end of apartheid almost a decade earlier. It also came at a time when Zimbabwe was sinking into an economic quagmire and the need to provide a stage for unheard voices was immense. Indeed, as *Chimurenga* editor, Ntone Edjabe, emphasises, the magazine is "a publication borne out of an urgent need to write our world differently, to begin asking new questions, or even the old ones anew. When will the new emerge— and if it is already here, how do we decipher it?"[34]

[34] Online. Available at: http://www.multiplejournalism.org/case/chimu

For example, Olufemi Terry's 2010 Caine winning story, "Stickfighting Days" was originally published in *Chimurenga* Vol. 12/13. In this story, Terry gives voice to a group of street children living in a dumpsite where innocence, violence, crime and a struggle for survival exist side by side. In this story, Terry creatively characterises and humanises the dumpsite children through their brutal skills with their stick weapons. The main character, Raul, depends on his sticks named Mormegil and Orcrist, not only to demonstrate his skills in stick fighting but as a weapon for survival.

Kwani Trust, on the other hand, was founded in Kenya when the country was experiencing a new wave of political and cultural freedom following the end of President Daniel Moi's 24-year-rule in Kenya. The Moi regime in Kenya was characterised by repression of various rights like the freedom of information and free speech. The previous government was also marked by a deteriorating economic infrastructure that affected different areas of the economy including the publishing, the education as well as the literary sector. In an interview with Grace Musila in *Kunapipi* journal, Parselelo Kantai, one of the founding members of *Kwani*?, noted that at the establishment of the literary magazine in 2002 there was "a lot of hope and tremendous optimism for the future [of Kenya]" adding that, "[t]his emergent writing (primarily published in *Kwani*? magazine) promised a chronicling of new era as well as an interrogation of 25 years of silence" (71). The literary journal was therefore established at the dawn of a new government that allowed for freedom of expression and information. Indeed, the first edition of the literary magazine included many articles dealing with Kenya's history of political silencing, presented in different formats including short stories and illustrations. Among *Kwani*?'s most prominent publications is *The Cock Thief* (2010), a novella by Parselelo Kantai which is set in the Moi era in Kenya. *The Cock Thief* focuses on the president's driver who steals a significant political emblem, a golden cock, and flees to the border. It is important to read the major symbol used in this text, the cock, against the image of the cockerel that acts as the political emblem of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) – the political party associated with president Moi's rule in Kenya. The other major publications by *Kwani?* is Billy Kahora's *The True Story of David Munyakei* (2009) which documents the story of Kenya's biggest whistle-blower. Munyakei, a clerk at the Central Bank of Kenya in the 1990s, exposed Kenya's biggest economic scandal, the Goldenberg Scandal, which involved top government officials and is estimated to have cost the country the equivalent of more than 10% of its annual GDP.

The trends in stories published by international journals and magazines, on the other hand, are mainly preoccupied with the idea of exile, detailing experiences of African immigrants in the West, and their nostalgia for home. The stories "America" (CP shortlist 2013) by Chinelo Okparanta in *Granta*, "Monday Morning" (CP winner 2005) by Segun Afolabi in *Wasafiri*, "Miracle" (CP winner 2013) by Tope Folarin in *Transition* and "The Intervention" (CP shortlist 2014) by Tendai Huchu published in *Open Road Review* all deal with the life of African immigrants in the west and their cultural and economic struggles. NoViolet Bulawayo's "Hitting Budapest" (CP winner 2011) published in *Boston Review*, Mukoma wa Ngugi's "How Kamau wa Mwangi Escaped into Exile" (CP shortlist 2009) in *Wasafiri* and Huchu's stories further explore life in Africa under different oppressive regimes and the subsequent escape, usually to the West. While wa Ngugi locates his story in Kenya during the oppressive rule of President Daniel Moi, both Huchu and Bulawayo allude to life in Zimbabwe during the political and economic decline led by Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF. The focus of the stories published in international literary journals and magazines gives urgency to postcolonial issues affecting Africa from the diaspora.

In pursuit of symbolic capital: the staging of antagonism

The participation of local literary organisations in the knowledge production industry has raised several controversies not only within the political arena but also in its relationship with other institutions of cultural and literary production. Indeed, as Peter Benson (1986) notes,

> That the work of men such as Beier, Neogy, Soyinka, Clark, Mazrui and Theroux [editors of *Transition* and *Black Orpheus*] was (and remains) controversial was no accident. They had set out to make waves, in an effort to see if those waves would stir up something new – something unprecedented in art and intellect. (13)

This strategy is still evident in contemporary literary journals and organisations. The writers and critics are engaged in continuous controversies with funding organisations, with literary prizes, with academic institutions and with other writers. From the choice of names to the content of the publications, these literary organisations appear to be questioning the status quo by introducing controversy not only at the political and cultural level but at the literary level too. For instance, the name '*Kwani*?' is coined from a Kiswahili phrase meaning 'so what?' while '*Chimurenga'* is a Shona word which loosely translates as (revolutionary) 'struggle'. Further, the establishment of *Storymoja* literary organisation came as a result of

fallout amongst some of *Kwani*?'s founding members and as *Storymoja*'s Managing Director, Muthoni Garland, further explains, the main controversy was driven by the search for economic autonomy. She says in an interview with *This is Africa* magazine:

> After I quipped about the reliance on donor contributions in the early days of *Kwani*? literary journal, its lead founder, Binyavanga [Wainaina], challenged me to develop my sparky idea of creating a profitable business selling low-cost, short fiction for the *matatu* masses. Thus it was that five writers started *Storymoja* to try prove a point.[35]

While reliance on donor funding is still a major issue that continues to raise conflict in cultural and literary organisations, more controversy has been generated by the journals' efforts to distance themselves from mainstream institutions of literary production like academic institutions and well-established for-profit publishers. While making a comparative analysis between the creative writing of the early independence era in Africa and the writings developing after the year 2000, Strauhs (2013) foregrounds the role of the academy. She writes:

> Whereas the transnationally renowned writing of the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by outspoken writers and lecturers from the universities and the publishing industry, the current literary production […] has evidently been influenced by writers who – unlike many of the earlier generations – were not primarily groomed as literary talents by literature departments or publishing houses. These authors have been publishing online and offline from within social networks, most notably in the form of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) […] with their own publications, reading events, and literary festivals. (21)

In the interview published in *Kunapipi* journal, Kantai claims that, "in Kenyan literary circles, you have people who have been heads of departments at the university for 30 years or longer. You have people who have refused to do anything new: and the only way the *Kwani?* project could exist was by trying to take them on and to stand outside its shadow" (79). Through the investment in local literary organisations, African writers are rising to challenge the literary mainstream. The literary journals and organisations challenge the mainstream especially by distancing themselves from the university. *Kwani*? has demonstrated cultural

[35] See Muthoni Garland's interview by Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire at http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/muthoni-garland-five-writers-started-storymoja-to-try-to-prove-a-point/

autonomy and a break from mainstream and academic publishing not only through its physical location and membership composition but also through its experimentation with language use, form and style. As Dina Ligaga notes, "*Kwani*? has managed to cut out a niche for itself by tapping into Kenyan popular culture and demanding recognition as an emergent popular literary journal that defies convention by drawing from forms that have not been used before within the Kenyan literary space" (46). *Kwani*? has pushed the boundaries of literature by publishing works in Sheng[36], photo essays, SMS narratives, cartoons and emails, genres and forms "which had previously suffered a literary blackout due to narrow definitions of the literary" (Musila, "Central and East", 76). James Ogude and Joyce Nyairo in "East African Popular Culture and Literature" underscore the centrality of *Kwani*? as a major institution of cultural production which has managed to deconstruct the dominant hold of the English language in East African literature in "an attempt to accommodate the pluralistic heritage of the third generation of urban East Africans, especially in Kenya where Sheng thrives" (3).

Hilda Twongyeirwe writes in "The Beginning of a Dream" that the foundational seeds for FEMRITE were sowed within a university setting. The initial meetings to discuss about forming the organisation were held in Mary Okurut's office at the Department of Literature at Makerere University and the founding members were drawn from the academia. However, in an interview with Strauhs, Okurut admits that the decision towards founding FEMRITE was triggered by an incident in which one of her students was turned down by major publishing organisations because, according to the publishers, being a woman, her poetry had "probably lots of feminist stuff which is boring in the African context" (Strauhs 33). In this light, FEMRITE was founded with a goal to provide an alternative literary outfit that was not framed within academic or mainstream publishing frameworks. Strauhs further explains that although FEMRITE was established within the university setting, the group was soon forced to find another space for their meetings because they realised that they needed "space and freedom away from 'the enclosed' little walls" (34). The physical relocation of the literary organisation from Makerere University to a rented space at the National Theatre in Kampala demonstrates a conscious effort to maintain autonomy by breaking free from the patronage of the academia as a major institution of literary and cultural production.

The establishment of new literary organisations has provided new ground for creative writing expression by "its insistence on challenging and dismantling conventional genre boundaries"

[36] Sheng is a hybrid language that borrows mainly from English and Kiswahi as well as other languages spoken in Kenya. Sheng is spoken mainly by the youth and in the urban spaces.

(Musila, "Central and East", 77). Indeed, as Strauhs notes, "these organisations have been providing a platform for writers of various backgrounds to experiment with form, media, content and language, thereby giving birth to new literary trends as well as publications that not only transforms creative writing […] but also enrich the educational sector and local civil society as fora for opinion making" (1). However, as Musila (2006) adds, "[t]his liberal approach to literature did not go down well with the mainstream literary critics and set off what has come to be known as 'the great debate' – a long and heated debate in local literary circles which played itself out in the local media" (77). The debate revolved around the definitions of 'popular' and 'mainstream' literature, and the role of new cultural institutions like *Kwani*? in the creation of a literary canon.

Strauhs observes that it is typical for contemporary African Literary NGOs to distance themselves from the academic sphere in the search for cultural independence (54). The irony of this is that in as much as these literary organisations and their authors try to position themselves outside of academic institutions, they still maintain links with the academy through different avenues. For instance, in an interview with William Skidelsky for the *Guardian*, Adichie argues that "academia is not for me", citing the patronising gaze of Western academies on Africa as her main reason to mistrust the academia.[37] Despite her utterances, Adichie, who runs the annual *Farafina* creative writing workshop, graduated with an MA in Creative Writing from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. She later enrolled for an MA in African Studies at Yale University. In addition, writers from local literary organisations continue to receive writing fellowships at academic institutions and the choice of thematic concerns in the literature produced by these writers further appeals to academia. Ligaga argues that *Kwani*? relies on popular forms to attract funding from the Ford Foundation as well as align itself with major requirements of mainstream institutions of cultural production. She adds that this raises questions regarding "its degree of commitment to maintaining its use of popular forms and its exploration of new literary spaces" (51-2). Ligaga explains this by citing the example of Owuor's CP winning story as a *Kwani*? narrative "written for awards" (52). She opines:

> 'Weight of Whispers', which won the Caine Prize [in] 2003, was tailored more to suit the requirements of the Caine Prize than to explore popular forms in Kenya. The issues that she was dealing with such as the refugee problem in Kenya and the

[37] See Adichie's interview with William Skidelsky available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/apr/05/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-interview

> incompetence of the government were more in line with the requirements of the Caine Prize and what we have tended to associate with mainstream literature in Kenya […] creating an increasingly canonical outlook for *Kwani*?" (52)

As expounded in the previous chapter, literary prizes achieve their legitimacy to consecrate writers from different cultural, economic and political spheres. One of these spheres is the academic institution. Besides the thematic content of the stories produced, the literary magazines, as well as the prize organisations, have learnt to rely on the symbolic and cultural capital that is associated with the academic institutions. The effort by the contemporary literary organisation to distance itself from the university and other institutions of literary production therefore, is a conscious staging of antagonism with the aim to achieve more cultural and symbolic power to consecrate literature. The antagonism is a form of contesting hegemony in African literary and cultural production and is driven by a power struggle to gain the authority to participate in canon formation.

The search for autonomy

The search for social, economic and political autonomy remains a major concern for literary institutions aiming to produce a literature uncoloured by patronage. Since most of the literary journals and magazines exist "outside the market economy" the most immediate pressure faced in their survival is economic independence (McDonald 123). Financial sponsorship therefore stands as a major factor that influences the production of literary commodities in any society. In a personal interview with *Kwani*? Managing Editor, Billy Kahora, he argued that it is impossible to escape patronage and instead proposed for writers and literary organisations to embrace "positive patronage" that allows for the growth and development of literary culture on the continent.[38] Kahora noted that "literature thrives on patronage not only in Africa but in the wider literary world, historically." His sentiments are echoed by Harbach, in the "Introduction" to *MFA vs NYC* (2014), who urges the reader:

> to consider the fiction writer less as an utterly free artistic being, with responsibilities only to posterity and eternal truth (or whatever), and more as a person constrained by circumstances – a person who needs money, and whose milieu influences the way she lives, reads, thinks and writes. A person whose work is shaped by education and economy and a host of other pressures, large and small. (4)

[38] Personal interview with Billy Kahora by Doseline Kiguru. Cape Town, 20 May 2014.

English (2005) contends that the production of cultural value "is always implicated, in multiple ways, in the money economy" (27). Therefore, the need to create and maintain autonomy in literary organisations starts with financial independence. It also calls for a balance between the cultural, political and economic value. However, this is a difficult task for organisations that have been forced to contend with lack of funds to finance their daily operations, including publishing costs, salaries for staff and dealing with competition from other well established literary organisations. It is this need for autonomy that has seen a recent uproar by African writers and critics affiliated with these literary organisations who are questioning the legitimacy of the international prize like the Caine in the canonization of the African writer. In fact, as Wainaina and Adichie argue in different contexts, this legitimacy should be accorded by the local literary organisations and journals which have continued to play a major role in not only shaping the contemporary writer but in the production of African literary culture on the continent and globally.

In the absence of funding, the internet has played an important role in not only the production of literary culture but also by providing space for engaging in critical debates regarding the role of different canonizing agents for African literature. As expounded earlier, most of these local literary organisations have managed to cover and reach a wider audience and membership through online publications and campaigns through the social media. It is also through these online channels that most of the writers have also taken the debate between the legitimacy of the Caine and the role of the local African literary organisations.

In an interview with Nigerian journalist Chiagozie Nwonwu in 2014, Wainaina called for African writers to stop giving legitimacy to the CP.[39] In the interview which took place in Nigeria soon after Wainaina had facilitated yet another *Farafina* creative writing workshop, he argues:

> If there was no *Saraba*, if there was no *Farafina* workshop, if there was no Cassava republic, if there was no Tolu Ogunlesi meeting Nick in South Africa and then workshoping [sic] stories, if there was no Ivor Hartmann, if there were no thirty thousand Facebook groups that I know of or don't know, there will be no Okwiri [Oduor], there will be no Elnathan [John], etc. What is happening is you people are allowing the Caine Prize to receive funding and build itself as a brand and make money and people's career[s] there in London while the vast majority of these

[39] Online. Available at: http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/must-stop-giving-legitimacy-caine-prize-binyavanga/

> institutions are vastly underfunded and vastly *ungrown*, and they are the ones who create the ground that is building these new writers.[40]

Wainaina was writing this after his participation in the Africa39 project that compiled a list of the best new and upcoming African writers – a project that saw the foregrounding of many writers previously canonised by international literary prizes like the Caine. Africa39 is a World Book Capital project which has previously been held in Bogota in 2007 and in Beirut 2010. The research initiative, headed by Wainaina, culminated in the launch of the book *Africa39* (2014) at the Book Fair in Port Harcourt, the World Book Capital, 2014. The book compiles a collection of short stories and extracts from novels from 39 writers under the age of 40 from Sub-Saharan Africa and the diaspora who have greatly influenced the literary scene or whose potential for doing so is undisputed.[41] The selected 39 writers not only reflect the impact of the international prize in literary production, they also demonstrate the increasing relevance of local literary organisations. Many of these writers are also affiliated with locally established writers' associations and literary organisations like *Kwani*?, *Farafina*, *Saraba*, *Jalada*, *Chimurenga* and FEMRITE.

The response to Wainaina's interview with *This is Africa* magazine was heavy criticism as well as support in equal measure. Writers who responded to his provocation included 2011 CP nominated writer Lauri Kubuitsile and Nigerian writer Obina Udenwe who criticized Wainaina for being 'ungrateful' to the institution that consecrated him through his 2002 win.[42] Despite the fact that Wainaina's position as a global writer is linked to the cultural and economic capital acquired through the prize industry following his Caine win, his remarks about the award body raises questions on the influence of different production structures in canonisation. It also draws attention to the intersection between economic capital and cultural capital in literary production, pointing to the significance of cultural capital in the absence of economic capital in the context of African literary production. By focusing on the funding, which is unevenly distributed between the international award body and the local African writers' organisation, Wainaina acknowledges the influential role of economic capital in literary production and its effects in creating a cultural value. As Guillory (1993) notes, therefore, the problem of canon formation is the problem of access to the means of literary production (ix).

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[40] Online. Available at: http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/must-stop-giving-legitimacy-caine-prize-binyavanga/
[41] See description available at: http://www.hayfestival.com/africa39/about.aspx?skinid=27
[42] Online. Available at: http://thoughtsfrombotswana.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-caine-prize-and-me.html and http://brittlepaper.com/2014/09/binyavanga-wainaina-rape-caine-prize-obinna-udenwe/

In the interview with *This is Africa*, Wainana continues to argue in favour of literary organisations, as opposed to prizes, as major producers of literary value in the contemporary African literary landscape:

> I want people to say, Okwiri, who won the Caine Prize, is the founder of *Jalada*, an online magazine that has won five prizes in the last year and published, I think, the most exciting fiction I've seen in ten years. Just that magazine, has more excitement than many known ones, but they are invisible. Seven years ago, I came here (Nigeria) and I felt nothing is going on in the online community in Kenya. Then Dami Ajayi and Emmanuel Iduma went and started *Saraba*. People there in Kenya smelled *Saraba*, made their own and that was it. Now, writers in America are approaching writers published in *Saraba* and these online magazines to give them fellowships abroad.[43]

In this statement, Wainaina is further exposing the staged controversy that exists between literary organisations and academic institutions by acknowledging the link to the literary market, through writing fellowships that the university provides for writers. He is also consciously trying to shift the focus of writers and critics from western based literary agents, including publishers and prize organisations as the major canonizing agents for African writers. He argues that the African literary organisations have also earned the legitimacy to validate African literature.

In line with Wainaina's sentiments, Adichie has also been vocal in calling for a wider perspective regarding the canonization of African literature. Dismissing the significance of the Caine Prize in an interview with *The Boston Review* in 2013, Adichie claimed that the Caine is not "the arbiter of the best fiction in Africa," adding that "I don't go to the Caine Prize to look for the best in African fiction […] I go to my mailbox, where my workshop people send me their stories."[44] Adichie is referring here to the annual Farafina creative writing workshop in Nigeria where she is the main facilitator, together with Wainaina.

These writers argue in favour of writers' organisations as major producers of literary value in the contemporary African literary landscape because "[a]t stake in the literary field, and more

[43] Online. Available at: http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/must-stop-giving-legitimacy-caine-prize-binyavanga/
[44] Online. Available at: http://bostonreview.net/fiction/varieties-blackness

specifically in the field of criticism is, among other things, the authority to determine the legitimate definition of the literary work and, by extension, the authority to define those works which guarantee the configuration of the literary canon" (Johnson 1993, 20). It is in challenging this authority to define that Wainaina and Adichie critique the role of the Caine as a legitimizing agent for African writers and literature. Wainaina's and Adichie's arguments compliment Johnson's (1993) comment that "[t]he establishment of a canon in the guise of a universally valued cultural inheritance or patrimony constitutes an act of 'symbolic violence' […] in that it gains legitimacy by misrecognizing the underlying power relations which serve, in part, to guarantee the continued reproduction of the legitimacy of those who produce or defend the canon" (20). These writers and literary critics express the need to acknowledge the different institutions involved in the power matrix that involves the definition of African literature.

Wainaina's short story, "Ships in High Transit", also clearly espouses the idea of literary legitimacy and consecration. The story produced at the first Caine Prize for African Writers' Workshop in South Africa in 2003. "Ships in High Transit" is about tourism in East Africa and strategies employed by different individuals to comply with the requirements of the tourist industry. In this story, Wainaina attempts to call for the inclusion of different players in the definition of events, phenomena and people. He does this by employing the third person perspective with shifting focalization. At the end of the narrative, the audience experiences the unfolding of events not only from the perspective of the main narrator, Matano, who is a local tour guide, but also from different tourists, from the corrupt tour company owner, as well as from the eyes of different local people who place themselves as the 'exotic' objects for the entertainment of the tourists. "Ships in High Transit", therefore, enters into dialogue with Adichie's now famous TED talk on "The Danger of a Single Story."[45] And the 'danger of a single' institution of canon formation confirms Pascale Casanova's (1999) sentiments that "[t]he world of letters is a relatively unified space characterized by the opposition between the great national literary spaces, which are also the oldest – and, accordingly, the best endowed – and those literary spaces that have more recently appeared and that are poor by comparison" (83). This opposition is driven by the power relations that exist between the dominant and the dominated groups in the context of literary production. The dominant groups here include the funding organisations that maintain the power to determine the production and consumption of literary value in African literature.

[45] See the video recording of the TED talk at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

Bourdieu views this as symbolic violence which is exerted through economic domination. Writing in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), he notes that:

> domination no longer needs to be exerted in a direct, personal way when it is entailed in possession of the means (economic or cultural capital) of appropriating the mechanisms of the field of production and the field of cultural production, which tend to assure their own reproduction by their very functioning, independently of any deliberate intervention by the agents. (183-4)

The uprising of the criticism regarding the legitimacy of the international prize and international donors for African literature is therefore an effort towards the demolition of the structures of domination. These critics are making a statement that literary production is driven by different agents and in this case, the African literary organisation has earned its right to become one of the validating agencies for African writers and literature.

Conclusion

By examining the points of contact between theory and practice, this chapter has demonstrated that the production of cultural and literary value in Africa is framed within knowledge economies. It argues that there is need for local funding for local organisations in order to produce independent African literature uncoloured by international and external patronage. However, the chapter also acknowledges that "texts are in fact commodities (however idealistically one might wish to think about them in the academy) that needs to fit themselves into the venues or contexts in which they are published (in order to be published)" (Flanery 220). In this regard, the next chapter is going to explore how different African writers have learnt to interact and negotiate with the international literary prize as a major validating agency in literary production. This is based on the sentiments of Casanova who suggests that:

> In order to achieve literary recognition, dominated writers must therefore yield to the norms decreed to be universal by the very persons who have a monopoly on universality. More than this, they need to situate themselves at just the right distance from their judges: if they wish to be noticed, they have to show that they are different from other writers –but not so different that they are thereby rendered invisible. They must be neither too near nor too far. (156)

Recognising the impossibility of writers' independence, especially in the absence of financial freedom, the next chapter will discuss how writers have learnt to work within frameworks of patronage. It recognises that African writers are participants in the crowded global marketplace and that they have learnt to align themselves within the social, political and economic frameworks by devising strategies of visibility within the literary world. Following on this global literary positioning, the chapter will therefore be framed on the idea of "strategic exoticism" as expounded by Huggan (2001).

CHAPTER 4

African Literary Prizes and the Aesthetics of Suffering

Introduction

The previous chapters attempted to place literary prizes within the system of African print cultures, demonstrating the continued significance of the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) as well as the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (CWSSP) in shaping the literary content produced and consumed from the continent. This chapter builds on the previous one by arguing that the content of these prize stories is highly influenced or dependent on the material conditions of the stories' production and consumption. The content is shaped by the prize, its requirements, rules, and regulations, as well as the politics associated with a specific prize. As James English (2005) asserts, "[t]here is no evading the social and political freight of a global award at a time when global markets determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies" (298). In this respect, a critical analysis of several of the winning and shortlisted stories for both the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes provide a framework for reading the influence of an international prize on African literature and the impact this may have for understanding the contexts of contemporary African writing. My aim in this chapter is to look closely at the prize-winning stories in order better to understand the kind of inflections that confer global intelligibility on African literary products. I focus especially on the role of pain and suffering in the prize-winning stories, demonstrating the process through which these narratives become a literary currency in the international literary marketplace. I argue that the international prize industry for African literature, whether consciously or unconsciously, has provided a platform where African writers can engage with the questions of representation, challenging the power structures evident within different institutions of canon formation.

The glamour and spectacle of pain

From the context of African studies, pain and suffering continue to be major concerns not only for literary artists but for other theorists as well. Recent literary and critical discussions of the place of postcolonial literature, especially that which is mediated through international literary awards, have dwelled mainly on the role of different literary and cultural institutions

in promoting a stereotypical image of Africa as one ridden with death, disease, war and poverty. These accusations have been directed at writers as well as at literary institutions like the Caine. For instance, Dobrota Pucherová, in "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last", accuses the CP of contributing greatly to the marginalisation of African literature by presenting it as an "exotic commodity" (22). Graham Huggan (2001) and Akin Adesokan (2012), on the other hand, put the blame on the postcolonial writers who write to please a foreign audience whose view of Africa is framed within the lenses of violence and destitution. Booker Prize winner and current CP Vice President, Ben Okri, has also voiced his remarks on African literature and its reliance on social and political relevance. In an article published in *The Guardian* that provoked a significant polemic about African literature and the role of the writer, Okri decried the fact that African literature is valued and defined not according to its art, but rather according to its subjects.[46] Okri argued that the utilitarian value accorded to African literature has led to the foregrounding of stories of pain and domination where "black and African writers are read for their novels about slavery, colonialism, poverty, civil wars, imprisonment, female circumcision – in short, for subjects that reflect the troubles of Africa and black people as perceived by the rest of the world."

Therefore, as Achille Mbembe notes in "African Modes of Self-Writing", there is a tenacious persistence of the idea of looking back at the violence that has shaped the history of Africa since its encounter with the West. Mbembe argues that three major historical events have continued to shape African writing: "slavery, colonisation and apartheid" (241). These events, although based on real and identifiable historical realities, he adds, have led to a "dead end" in terms of "reflections on the African experience of the self and the world" (242). One effect of this "dead end" has been the continued stereotyping of the continent as a site for perennial violence. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon provided an early analysis of the place of violence in the anti-colonial struggle. He theorised that anti-colonial violence takes both a physical as well as a psychological form (73). As Fanon demonstrates, in nations struggling with political domination, whether in the present or in the past, the process of "decolonisation is always a violent process" (27). Writing in *The Postcolony* (2001), Mbembe further adds to the discussion by examining the violence of death in the colony and postcolony in what he terms as "the phenomenology of violence" (173). Here, Mbembe explores the nature of physical and psychological violence which

[46] Online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/27/mental-tyranny-black-writers See also: Sofia Samatar's "Black and African Writers don't need Instructions from Ben Okri" at http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/dec/30/african-writers-instructions-ben-okri

dehumanises the subject by presenting him/her as the non-existent Other in an effort to justify political, economic as well as social domination. Mbembe furthers this discussion in "Necropolitics", noting the continued violence by authority institutions which rob the subject of his/her humanity while also creating the conditions for this subject to contribute to his/her destruction (174).

It is such narratives – preoccupied with representing an image of a continent that is torn apart by war, poverty, disease and oppressive cultures and governments – that motivate Habila to contemplate whether these writers are representing realities on the continent fairly, or whether they are only aligning themselves to an emerging 'Caine Prize aesthetic' for an imagined audience. In a review of NoViolet Bulawayo's 2013 Booker Prize nominated novel, *We Need New Names* (2013), Habila claims that "[t]here is a palpable anxiety to cover every 'African' topic; almost as if the writer had a checklist made from the morning's news on Africa." These 'African topics', as he explains in the review article published in *The Guardian*, include "child soldiers, genocide, child prostitution, female genital mutilation, political violence, police brutality, dictatorships, predatory preachers, dead bodies on the roadside."[47] This 'Caine Prize aesthetic', therefore, is an aesthetic of pain and suffering that presents the continent as a victim in need of help.

Among the CP winning entries, Habila's "Love Poems" (2001) is a story about the experiences of ordinary citizens in Nigeria during the military rule. It is the story of a journalist, now a political detainee, who is wrongfully accused and imprisoned for daring to question the oppressive military regime. Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's 2003 winning story "Weight of Whispers" narrates the experiences of the Rwandan genocide from a formerly privileged family's point of view. The story centres on the family members living as refugees in Kenya, detailing the realities of displacement through war. Owuor's win was followed by Zimbabwean writer Brian Chikwava's "Seventh Street Alchemy." Chikwava's narrative is set during the years of economic crisis in Zimbabwe, with characters that illustrate the effects of the economic meltdown on ordinary citizens. In 2005, the winning story, "Monday Morning", by Segun Afolabi, describes the life of an African immigrant family in Europe and the difficulties they face adjusting to a new life. The family has been displaced by war and is running away from the "artillery and soldiers and flies feeding on abandoned corpses" (Afolabi 10). South African Mary Watson's 2006 winning story, "Jungfrau", centres on child

[47] Online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/20/need-new-names-bulawayo-review

abuse in a narrative that attempts to use the violence at the domestic space as a reflection of the violence at the public and national level in the post-apartheid state. Watson's win was followed by Ugandan Monica Arac de Nyeko's in 2007. Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" describes the life of a homosexual teenage couple living in the middle of a civil war and their society's negative reaction to their sexual orientation. Another South African writer, Henrietta Rose-Innes, won the Caine in 2008 for her short story "Poison." This is an apocalyptic narrative set in Cape Town tracing the steps of a woman fleeing from a chemical disaster. The whole city is covered by a dark cloud, threatening destructive chemical rain and the people have to escape in haste. E.C. Osondu's winning story in 2009 is a harrowing narrative of children who have become refugees, fleeing from a war they know nothing about. The story is set within a refugee camp and follows the daily lives of these children facing hunger, disease and displacement. The story's theme is echoed the following year with the winning story by Olufemi Terry which is set in an unidentified garbage dump. "Stickfighting Days" is narrated from the perspective of one of the street children who lives in the dump and the content reflects their violent struggle for survival amidst physical and psychological pain as the narrator explains: "I practise with Lapy much of that day, in a remote bit of the dump. …By the evening our feet blister from acid waste, and I feel like crap. My sadness has nothing to do with fighting sticks" (64). NoViolet Bulawayo's 2011 prize story, "Hitting Budapest", furthers on the narrative of children facing poverty, hunger and destitution. It also extends on Chikwava's narrative on the effects of the Zimbabwe economic crisis.

Among the prize-winning stories from the CWSSP, HIV/AIDS and its devastating effects tend to take centre stage. Other issues that are explored by the Commonwealth stories include poverty, war and migration. One of the earliest stories to win the prize, "Independence Day" (2000-2001) by Geoff Hill, is about an African immigrant family living in London. They are getting ready to celebrate their country's 20th independence day at a family dinner. The longing for home is not assuaged by the traditional Zimbabwean food the mother tries to make from memory and with limited ingredients. The family dinner turns into a fight because the children do not understand the history of their country and the parents cannot come to terms with their children's lack of attachment to Zimbabwe. CWSSP winner in 2005-2006, Ifeanyi Ajaegbo, writes a prison story where an inmate narrates the horrors and suffering of incarceration, and especially for prisoners in solitary confinement. "Yesterday's Darkness" vividly describes the pain and anguish of the prisoners, expressed through their howling voices as the main character is led to be executed, doomed never to return.

Among the winning entries in both the Caine and Commonwealth prizes, Nigeria has featured prominently and most of the stories told are those of the Nigerian-Biafran war or the years of oppression under military rule. Numerous other short stories from West Africa also tend to focus on conflict and displacement. Some of these shortlisted and winning stories include Victor Ehikhamenor's "The Supreme Command" (CWSSP 2003-2004); Henry Chukwuemeka Onyeama's "The Final Darkness" (CWSSP 2005-2006); Anietie Isong's "Diary of an Ecomog Soldier" (CWSSP 2000-2001) and Rotimi Babatunde's "Bombay's Republic" (CP 2012). The foregrounding of violence in these prize narratives therefore necessitates a careful scholarly investigation into the significance of pain and suffering in African literature that is mediated through the international literary prize.

The prize industry's overreliance on violent and painful historical realities is what prompts the 2012 CP chair of judges, Bernardine Evaristo, to pose the question whether it is not time 'to move on'. In her contribution to the Caine blog in 2012, Evaristo decried the high number of short stories received that year which only focused on the negative aspects of the African continent. As the chair, she explained her selection process which involved "looking for stories about Africa that enlarge our concept of the continent beyond the familiar images that dominate the media: War-torn Africa, Starving Africa, Corrupt Africa – in short: The Tragic Continent."[48] Her concern was evidently not misplaced, because the winning story in 2012 was in fact centred on the violence of colonial domination. "Bombay's Republic" by Rotimi Babatunde revisits the interaction between Africa and Europe as well as other regions of the world through colonialism and WWII. It goes further to document the process of decolonisation in Africa that followed shortly after the experiences of the war. The story starts by narrating the ills and dehumanising nature of colonialism and war, and ends by returning to the theme of corruption and poor political leadership in contemporary Africa. Some of the other stories shortlisted in the same year also revisited the issues Evaristo raises. Malawian writer Stanley Onjezani Kenani's short story is about homosexuality, exploring the community and the government's punitive response to same-sex relationships. "Love on Trial" was published the year after Malawi was widely condemned for the arrest and conviction of two citizens for homosexuality.[49]

[48] Online. Available at: http://caineprize.blogspot.com/2012/04/bernardineevaristo-chair-of-judges-2012.html
[49] The couple was later released following pressure on the government from the main aid donors as well as the international community

It is these kinds of narratives that Habila has identified as possessing the aesthetics of suffering "that has emerged in a vacuum created by the judges and the publishers and agents over the years."[50] Several other critics have also accused the CP as well as other 'benevolent' international prizes for African art of a bias in selection; that these prizes ensure a continued stereotyping of Africa as a place of suffering. Pucherová is critical of writings that subscribe to this aesthetic, and argues that the Caine participates in the deliberate marginalisation of postcolonial texts in the international literary scene. She observes that

> [m]any Caine finalists have drawn stereotypical images of Africa as a continent torn apart by war and violence, where poverty destroys people's dignity, ruling elites exploit the masses, rape happens on a daily basis, and wars, genocides and chemical explosions threaten livelihoods, mediated through a language of postcolonial subversion and hybridity. (20)

Okri, Habila and Pucherová's descriptions of contemporary African literature seem to align with Binyavanga Wainaina's now famous manifesto on "How to Write About Africa." In this deeply satirical article published by *Granta*, Wainaina exposes the high value accorded to narratives of pain and suffering from the African continent. He provides a list of what he calls "taboo subjects" for anyone writing about Africa and his satirical advice to writers is:

> Among your characters you must always include The Starving African, who wonders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty. She must look utterly helpless. She can have no past, no history; such diversions ruin the dramatic moment. Moans are good. She must never say anything about herself in the dialogue except to speak of her (unspeakable) suffering. (93)

As if misreading Wainaina's satirical guidelines as serious advice, many prize-winning stories from both the CP and the CWSSP are characterised by war, violence, displacement and ultimately, pain and suffering. However, to explore the relationship between the institutions of cultural production and the narratives of pain that are produced, it is important to note that the key issues covered in these prize-winning stories are not limited to the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes: the focus on violence, displacement and suffering has

[50] See Helon Habila's review of NoViolet Bulawayo's debut novel, *We Need New Names* (2013) at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/20/need-new-names-bulawayo-review

continued to be a major preoccupation of different writers and award institutions over different historical periods.

Writing about South African literary imaginings in the apartheid era, Njabulo Ndebele in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1991) decries the fact that "the history of black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle" (31). According to Ndebele, the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa resulted in "a highly dramatic, highly demonstrative form of literary representation" (31). He was writing about the literature produced under apartheid and yet the same demonstrative representation of pain and suffering still echoes in some contemporary African literature. The CP and CWSSP stories, although often more alert to the textures of the everyday and employing greater psychological realism, are haunted by the spectre of the spectacle. Ndebele (1991) formulated that the South African literature of spectacle was especially driven by the economic, social and political realities that confronted the writers on a daily basis living under apartheid in South Africa, concluding that "[i]t is no wonder then, that the black writer, sometimes a direct victim, sometimes a spectator, should have his imagination almost totally engaged by the spectacle before him" (32). Ndebele's postulation is based on the fact that when faced with oppressive socio-political factors, it is natural to expect the artist to be actively engaged in contributing towards the suppression of injustice. However, he is also quick to note that sometimes the oppressive social, economic and political realities result in the means of combating the situation becoming "too narrow and constricting" (155).

I argue that in contemporary African literature, an overreliance on the cultural, economic and political realities, writing about different socio-political injustices and the physical and psychological effects on individuals, has also resulted in projecting a literature of spectacle. Ndebele called attention to literary writing that "was done in a highly journalistic fashion" in the context of South African black writing under apartheid. The same issues referred to here are also mentioned by Habila in his review of Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and it is important here to reiterate his description of prize winning literature which seems "almost as if the writer had a checklist made from the morning's news on Africa."[51] As Ndebele observes, the literature of spectacle focuses more on the descriptions of pain and suffering, aiming to appeal to the reader's emotions. He characterises the spectacular thus:

[51] See Helon Habila's review of NoViolet Bulawayo's debut novel, *We Need New Names* (2013) at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/20/need-new-names-bulawayo-review

> [It] documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness. Nothing beyond this can be expected of it. (149)

One of the prize winning stories that has effectively relied on the power of spectacle is E.C. Osondu's "Waiting" which won the Caine in 2009. The setting of the story is a refugee camp in an unidentified part of Africa. There is a war raging on and the camp provides temporally shelter and protection. It is run by the Red Cross and as the child narrator explains, hunger, thirst, disease and loneliness characterise the lives of the people in this camp. This war is unidentified and, just as the characters are unnamed, no context of the war is provided and the reader only gains insight from snippets of conversations between the children in the camp. The cracking of the iron sheets under the hot sun reminds the children of the sound of gun shots and the smell of smoke triggers posttraumatic stress. For instance, one of the children only referred to as Acapulco believes that a bullet went through his ear and is now logged in his brain. He says:

> It went in through my bad ear. I hear explosions in my head, bullets popping, voices screaming, *banza, banza bastard, come out we will drink your blood today*, and then I smell carbide, gun-smoke, burning thatch. I don't like smelling smoke from fires when the women are cooking with firewood; it makes the bullets in my brain begin to go off. (58)

Although Acapulco has escaped the war and now lives in the refugee camp, the memory of gunfire, horrors of war, and brutality of deaths still haunts him. The poor living conditions in the camp which force the children to fight for food, water, clothing and other forms of basic survival also motivate some of the children to escape and join "the Youth Brigade" where the child soldiers are given "we-we to smoke and they drink blood and swear an oath to have no mercy on any soul, including their parents" (59). The demonstrative nature of this short story is realised especially in the descriptions of the body in pain. The story contains overt reference to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) when the narrator says that he

received the book from the Reverend Sister and after reading it he tried to compare the act of waiting in Beckett's play to the reality of living a life in anticipation in the camp:

> Here in the camp, we wait and wait and then wait some more. It is the only thing we do. We wait for the food trucks to come and then we form a straight line and then we wait a few minutes for the line to scatter, then we wait for the fight to begin, and then we fight and struggle and bite and kick and curse and tear and grab and run. And then we begin to watch the road and wait to see if the water trucks are coming, we watch for the dust trail, and then we go and fetch our containers and start waiting and then the trucks come and the first few containers are filled and the fight and struggle and tearing and scratching begin because someone has whispered to someone that the water tanker only has little water in it. That is, if we are lucky and the water tanker comes; oftentimes, we just bring out our containers and start waiting and praying for rain to fall. (54-5)

The absurdity of the waiting in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) is deconstructed and presented as the everyday life experiences in the refugee camps. In the camp, the children experience extreme forms of suffering due to war, poverty and displacement. They lack medical care, clothes, food, water and parental care and they are continually exposed to death. These agonies are captured, for example, in Osundu's depiction of one child's anguish caused by an untreated ear infection: "Pus is coming out of his ears and this gives him the smell of an egg that is a little rotten" (57). And in one of the most horrific descriptions of pain in the story, Osundu demonstrates the dreadfulness of starvation:

> We were so hungry we killed a few of the dogs and used them to make pepper-soup […] One day, a little child was squatting and having a shit. When the mother looked up, half a dozen of the dogs that had disappeared emerged from nowhere and attacked the little child. While the mother screamed, they tore the child to pieces and fled with parts of the child's body dangling between their jaws. (58)

This winning story's description completely ignores Wainaina's guide of how not to write about Africa. The story, "Waiting", seems to have missed the satire in Wainaina's article and goes to great detail to demonstrate and spectacularise the extent of pain and suffering experienced by the body of the child. With vivid descriptions, the author appeals to the emotions of the reader as a way of calling attention to the injustices of war. Indeed, the narrator in the prize-winning short story further tries to draw links between the lives of the

children in the camp to those of the hungry children described in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837) – a novel set in nineteenth century London about a group of orphans and the injustices of poverty and child labour. The narrator explains:

> I remembered a book Sister Nora once gave me to read about a poor boy living in England in the olden days who asked for more from his chief cook. From the picture of the boy in the book, he did not look so poor to me. The boys in the book all wore coats and caps and they were even served. We had to fight, and if you asked the chief cook for more, she would point at the lumps of *dawa* and the spilled soup on the floor and say we loved to waste food. (60)

Here the author deliberately strives to recreate and reimagine the event in Dickens' novel where the main protagonist, Oliver Twist, asks for more food and his plea is rebuked; a scene that has historically evoked pity and sympathy from the audience. Reference to this event in the Caine story is an attempt to appeal to the emotions of the audience by trying to demonstrate that the problems faced by these refugee children in camps are much worse than those faced by the poor workhouse children in Dickens' nineteenth century English novel. As Ndebele explains, the spectacular aims to demonstrate contrasts. The contrast here is between the different literary settings and the overall contest between the powerful and the powerless.

Ugandans Jackee Budesta Batanda (CWSSC 2003-2004), Taddeo Bwambale Nyondo (CWSSC 2008-2009), Beatrice Lamwaka (CP 2011) and Monica Arac de Nyeko (2004) have also written extensively on the pain and loss endured as a result of the civil war in Northern Uganda. The spectacle of pain is evident in these prize stories littered with limbless bodies and corpses. Special attention is accorded to the narrators, who are usually children, and to the representation of death and pain. Jackee Budesta Batanda's two stories, which have both been nominated for the CWSSP, attend to the violence of the civil unrest in Northern Uganda. "Dance with Me" and "Dora's Turn" both centre on the experiences of children in and during war. In "Dance with Me", which won the CWSSP in 2003, Lanielu, the child narrator, laments the effects of the war on her life, drawing attention to how she lost her legs. In the story set in a refugee camp where people are suffering from disease, malnutrition and trauma, Lanielu remembers how she had one day escaped from the camp together with other children in search of food. In the celebration that ensued after they found some cassava tubers on an abandoned farm, the children triggered a landmine that blew off Lanielu's legs. The child narrator describes the event thus:

> We found a garden and dug out cassava with our hands. Then we danced in glee. I jumped up and down then I felt myself being flung in the air. I opened my mouth to shout but the voice stuck in my throat. I came to in Lacor hospital. (Batanda, "Dance with Me" n.p)

The writer further depicts the psychological trauma that accompanies the narrator's loss of limbs. Lanielu narrates that in her dreams she meets her legs walking alone and she tries to take them back but they run away. The description of the pain suffered by this child character serves to command the attention of the audience to the realities of war. Beatrice Lamwaka's "Butterfly Dreams" furthers the attention to the war agenda by shifting the focus of the suffering to the families of child soldiers. In this Caine story, a ten-year-old girl, Lamunu, is abducted from her family in Northern Uganda and forced to become a child soldier in Southern Sudan. With no communication from the battlefield, the family's only hope is to keep their ears glued to the radio for any news of their child. Lamwaka, who was shortlisted for the CP in 2011, focuses on the pain and trauma that is experienced by the child soldiers and their families in order to describe individual and collective trauma. When Lamunu is abducted by the rebels, her family joins the others who have "become part of the string of parents who listened to Mega FM. Listening and waiting for the names of their loved ones" (Lamwaka 49). The families of the abducted children are eager for any news of the children and despite the poverty they strive to buy batteries for their radios in order to continue getting information. Through the radio, the families get to learn about the deaths of these abducted children or about their return to society after running away or being rescued. It is through this medium that Lamunu's family gets to know that she has been rescued and that she would be coming home soon.

In Lamwaka's story, which is told in an epistolary format, she shocks the reader by presenting the gruesome realities of the war in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan. In this narrative, the narrator is one of Lamunu's siblings writing to her to explain the effects of the war not only on her family but also on the entire community. In the letter, the narrator is trying to help Lamunu to understand the situation as well as to fit back into the community which has been torn apart by war for years leading to poverty, starvation and loss of human dignity. When the girl eventually gets back home after five years of serving as a child soldier, she struggles to fit in and prefers to retreat into silence as opposed to speaking about the horrors that she experienced on the battlefield. She becomes a shadow of her former self. Her family, who had already buried her *tipu*, spirit, because they thought she was dead, are

convinced that her spirit is no longer in her body and only the shell of their child has returned. While silence characterises her daily existence, it is at night that the experiences of the war haunt her and she manages to speak out and verbalise the horrors. She does this in her dreams, as the narrator describes:

> You spoke in your dreams. You turned and tossed in your mud bed. We held your hands. You were like a woman in labour. You spoke of ghosts. You spoke of rebels chasing you in Adilang because you tried to escape. You spoke of Akello, your friend, who they made you and your team beat to death because she tried to escape. (54)

In her dreams, her inhibitions and suppressions no longer apply and her unconscious mind keeps reliving the experiences of war by verbalising her involvement. In her dreams, she talks not only of herself as a victim of the violence but also as a participant, although an unwilling one. This story echoes Batanda's CWSSP (2004) short story, "Dora's Turn", about child soldiers and the dehumanising effect it has on the individual and collective society. In "Dora's Turn" a group of child soldiers are forced by their 14-year-old commander to kill their friends who had tried to escape. Acayo is forced to shoot her friend, Dora, but she is saved by government troops who ambush the rebel group in the forest.

By exploring the pain and suffering of the war and the effects it has on the individual and the community in general, Lamwaka and Batanda prompt the reader to look deeper into the question of war and the labelling of 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. In this community which has experienced war for decades, it becomes hard to point fingers or to differentiate between the victims and the perpetrators of violence. These children who are abducted from their families are forced to become killers and take part in the war whose genesis or goals they can never comprehend.

The stories about Rwanda are markedly different in their use of images of blood and killings by machetes and fire. Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's CP winning story "Weight of Whispers" and Uwem Akpan's CP shortlisted story "My Parents' Bedroom" paint grim pictures of the 100-days-long genocide. In these stories, the writers have gone to great lengths to narrate the horror of the genocide and present it to a wider audience beyond the Eastern African region. Akpan, a Nigerian writing about the genocide, describes the war by focusing on the experiences of one family. In this haunting story, nine-year-old Monique comes face to face with the realities of war while at the same time being confronted by the question of inhabiting the in-between spaces in a society. The parents belong to the differing communities – Hutu

and Tutsi – and the children do not know which identity to embrace. This family takes part in sheltering and hiding a group of Tutsis in their house. They are her mother's people. These wounded and dying people hide in the celling, the blood seeping through the wooden boards and running down the walls, painting the house red. The people in hiding think they are safe until the house is burned down and they all perish but not before Monique and her baby brother, Jean, witness how their father is forced to kill his own wife because she belongs to a different ethnic group:

> Papa lands the machete on Maman's head. Her voice chokes and she falls off the bed and onto her back on the wooden floor. It's like a dream. The knife tumbles out of Papa's hand. His eyes are closed, his face calm, though he's shaking. Maman straightens out on the floor as if she were yawning. Her feet kick, and her chest rises and locks as if she were holding her breath. There's blood everywhere – on everybody around her. It flows into Maman's eyes. She looks at us through the blood. She sees Papa become a wizard, sees his people telling him bad things. The blood flows over her eyelids, and Maman is weeping red tears. (Akpan 36)

In this story, the writer employs the innocence of the child to describe the brutalities of war and how it has the capacity to dehumanise the perpetrator as well as the victim. In this story, the spectacular is demonstrated by the vivid descriptions of blood, machetes, rape, arson and murder. The short story indeed points to the spectacular that Ndebele (1991) describes in which

> [s]ubtlety is avoided: what *is* intended is spectacular demonstration at all costs. What matters is what is seen. Thinking is secondary to seeing. Subtlety is secondary to obviousness. What is finally left and what is deeply etched in our minds is the spectacular contest between the powerless and the powerful. Most of the time the contest ends in horror and tragedy for the powerless. Sometimes there are victories, but they are always proportionally secondary to the massively demonstrated horror that has gone before. (38)

In Akpan's short story, just like in Osondu's "Waiting", Batanda's "Dora's Turn" and "Dance with Me", and Lamwaka's "Butterfly Dreams", among other prize stories, the reality of the war is used to create a literary spectacle which focuses more on the description and documentation of injustice on the African body, appealing to the "emotion rather than conviction" (Ndebele 149). These narratives are preoccupied with the documentation of the

pain and suffering of the powerless, and the literary award provides a stage for the spectacularisation of this pain. Through the literary award, the suffering is made into a spectacle and this is evidenced by the emphasis that the prize stories give to the description of bodies in pain. The description tries to create a mental image of the immensity of the pain inscribed on the African body. The spectacle also extends to include political and physical geographies that are painted as desolate, destroyed and a source of pain. The spectacle therefore becomes a tool of resistance; a form of agency to urge the world to confront realities on the continent.

A discussion of contemporary African literature and the aesthetics of pain must also bear in mind the economic and political conditions for cultural production on the continent. As expounded in the previous chapters, economic and political patronage are major influencing factors in African literary production, distribution and consumption. Writers' organisations in different parts of the continent have played an important role in influencing how literature from the continent is written as well as read. As demonstrated in Chapter three, the presence of writers' organisations such as Chimurenga, *Kwani*?, FEMRITE, among others, have been felt at the point of production through literary publishing as well as at the point of consumption through links with international awards.

I argue that economic dependency and the literary organisations' connection to NGO funding and patronage has also significantly contributed to the production of the aesthetics of pain and suffering in contemporary African literature. Since the 1990s, partially because of the collapse of provision of basic services that marked the end of the cold war, international development aid agencies shifted their focus from governments to NGOs. However, as Tina Wallace, Lisa Bornstein and Jennifer Chapman demonstrate, in *The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs* (2007), the power structures between the funding organisations and the recipients "privileges some voices to be heard and others ignored" (5). Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman discuss the influence of international aid in development and provide specific cases in South Africa and Uganda in the context of NGO funding and development, establishing the patronage that comes with donor reliance. They also demonstrate that the foregrounding of gender mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS related projects in Africa has mainly been effected through the stringent requirements of many NGO funding organisations.

Katherine Hallemeier writes in "Humanitarianism and the Humanity of Readers in FEMRITE's True Life Stories" that the political and economic history of FEMRITE organisation in Uganda has resulted in the production of short stories that mainly "echo an international humanitarian discourse that tends to emphasize […] personal testimony" (57). The stories published under the FEMRITE umbrella, and which eventually find their way to the CWSSP and the CP, are majorly concerned with representations of human rights abuses in Uganda, especially revolving "around the issues of women and law, women and HIV/AIDS, women in armed conflict situations in rural Uganda, as well as women and female genital mutilation" (Strauhs 156). I reiterate here that these stories are influenced by the funding organisation as well as the political framing of this literary outfit which aims to fulfil the Ugandan government's policy on gender empowerment. FEMRITE, in its early years, was principally funded by Humanistic Institute for Social Development (HIVOS), a Dutch NGO aiming at promoting humanist values. According to the HIVOS website, the NGO is concerned with promoting "human dignity and self-determination" with a guiding principle of "strengthening the social position of women" (Hivos, "Hivos-brief", n.p). The economic dependence on such NGOs in literary production, as Hallemeier explains, has forced the writers to "self-consciously address themselves to Anglophone audiences in the global North" (57). As demonstrated above, prize stories from FEMRITE writers or from writers associated with this organisation have been primarily concerned with HIV/AIDS and the violence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda. The narratives are shaped around human rights issues, demonstrating the resilience of the female survivors.

In the prize-winning stories, the African body has been used as a canvas to paint the effects of social and political realities like war, and death. The manifestation of suffering is evidenced by the body in pain and the analyses of prize narratives reveal the centrality of disease, especially the devastation of HIV/AIDS which is a common theme in the Commonwealth stories. The fact that the Commonwealth prize was initially a radio competition also partly explains the vivid description of the extent of the devastation on the body as a result of physical and mental illnesses.[52] The writers strived to create and sustain mental images of the devastation of the disease on the physical body, aiming to sensitize the audience about the consequences of HIV/AIDS.

[52] The CWSSP was a competition was for radio stories from 1996 to 2011. Since then, the radio broadcast is no longer a motivation for the prize stories and, as demonstrated later in this thesis, the change from broadcast to print has also influenced the literary styles and contents.

For instance, “Chikwanha’s Haunting Eyes” (2001-2002) by Alexander Kanengoni is the story of man who moves back to his rural town only to find that most of the people he used to know are dead and the rest are rotting away in poverty as a result of Zimbwabwe’s declining economy. The first-person narrator describes the meeting with an old acquaintance which starts off by stringing the names of the people he used to know who are now dead as a result of HIV/AIDS:

> He lifted his yes and asked whether I had heard that Charles had died. “And Langton. And Moses. And Innocent. And Cleopatra and…” I raised my hands to stop him because I knew whom he was edging towards. Lorraine, the school teacher I had had a brief fling with ten years ago when I still lived here. (Kanengoni, n.p)

The narrator talks about the raising poverty levels, the devastation of HIV/AIDS and the helplessness and anger in the people. The extent of the poverty and disease is presented by the description of the wasted body of a previously popular village bar maid whose family members came and took back to the rural areas “the bones that she had become” (n.p). On the same note, South African Becky Apteker in “Living by Bread Alone” (CWSSP 2006-2007) narrates the story of a lonely old man who befriends a 12-year-old neighbour. Soon the old man is let into the world of the boy and his family. Poverty, disease and insecurity are endemic in the neighbourhood and the boy’s mother, his only relative in the city, has been forced to move out of the city because “she has got the skinny disease” (Apteker, n.p). The boy is left alone in the city but he cannot seek help because he is afraid the authorities will reposes their apartment. Basset Buyuka, in “Martha” (CWSSP 2011), explores the effects of a stifling culture that allows for wife inheritance. The writer uses the character, Martha, who has been widowed as a result of HIV/AIDS, to write about the disease and the pain and devastation associated with it.

The choice of the writers to centre on HIV, and not any other prevalent diseases on the continent such as malaria, translates into a didactic teaching on sexual morality and health. HIV’s effect on the body also appeals to the style of spectacularisation of suffering, for the virus is characterised by the wasting away of the body, an image captured in many of these stories. The effects of such narratives, foregrounded through the international literary prize, is a continued stereotypical representation of the continent as riddled with disease and death. The prevalence of the narratives of disease has also contributed to the normalisation of suffering, a concept aptly conveyed by Taddeo Bwambale Nyondo in “Die, Dear Tofa”

(CWSSP 2008-2009). This is the story of a group of children who have become too accustomed to the realities of HIV/AIDS and death. The children try to enact the burial process that has become too familiar to them. One of the children, Tofa, is made to lie down in a grave and his playmates cover him up. The game however turns tragic when Tofa is left in his make-believe grave for too long, covered with soil.

The manifestations of pain on the African body is also evident through physical and psychological abuse. For instance, South African writer Mary Watson, who won the CP in 2007 for "Jungfrau", presents a haunting story of an abused child during the apartheid era in South Africa. Writing from the naïve child's perspective, Watson paints a picture of a family externally torn apart by the violence of apartheid and also internally destroyed by sexual abuse. "Jungfrau", from the German word, 'virgin', is a story about a child (who is unnamed throughout the narrative) and her relationship with her parents and her mother's adopted sister, the Virgin Jessica. In the story, the child narrator tells of the strains in her parents' marriage, the emotional neglect she suffers from parents who are active in fighting apartheid, and the sexual abuse she endures from her father. While her mother, a teacher, works to help destitute children from families torn apart by the violence of apartheid, her father spends his night in his daughter's bed or with her aunt, the "Virgin Jessica." The child lives in the shadow of her outgoing aunt and aspires to be everything Jessica is. In an ironic twist to the story, the child ends up being like her aunt when she learns that her father has also been involved in a sexual relationship with Jessica. At the end of the story, the child narrator confirms the sexual abuse she has endured by describing the moment when she witnesses a sex scene between her father and Jessica:

> And then I saw them. I had not imagined the moving tapestry in the corner of the schoolroom, nor had I imagined Jessica licking the furry flesh. As my eyes accustomed themselves to the dim light, I saw that it was my father with Jessica. They were clumsily covering their bodies, hiding themselves, and I thought that was silly – I had seen it all before. But I had not known that he shared the moss garden with her. (Watson 19)

In this story Watson manages to arouse the reader's emotions by exhibiting the suffering of a young child who is abused by the people she trusts. Her mother seems to only be concerned about 'her other children' while neglecting her own daughter. She spends her time caring for children from poorer backgrounds "in one of those schools where the children wore

threadbare jerseys and had hard green snot crystallized around their noses and above their crusty lips" (9). The abuse is exacerbated by the use of religion to make the child feel guilty about being a victim. This abused child is set on to the idea of viewing herself as the Virgin, unaware of the irony it echoes. She wants to be "a special person" like the Virgin Jessica who takes her name from the "Blessed Mary" (9). Watson relies on sexual abuse as a metaphor for apartheid and colonial violations. The spectacle of pain and suffering in this narrative is made even more vivid by the agency of the child protagonist who is also a victim. As Ndebele has argued, the spectacularisation of these violations is a form of calling attention to social and political issues that have historically remained unaddressed.

South African writer, Karen Jennings, won the CWSSP in 2010 for "From Dark." It is a story of pain, horror and anguish faced by illegal miners. The working conditions are poor and destructive for the miners who live underground for months, unable to tell the difference between day and night. The workers are mostly teenagers working to earn money for their families during the school holidays. When the mine collapses, they are confronted with death and the fear of arrest for working in an illegal mining field. The few who are eventually rescued from the belly of the earth after being trapped for days are sent to jail, destroyed both physically and mentally. Jennings writes:

> The miners were dragged past kilometres of rock and debris up to the surface. In the light, in the air, the boys gaped, their eyes streaming. The brightness surprised them, and the cold. They had been brought up naked, coming away from their months underground with nothing but their new bodies. Later, in a cell, the youngest of the boys had not stopped gaping nor had his eyes stopped streaming. He sat on the cement floor, leaning against the wall, refusing the bed. In the cold light of the upper world he had seen his fellows, seen what they had become in the ground. Scarred and stooped and coughing, deformed, frightening. What they had become was nothing like a man. In no way anything manlike. They, and he too, were fit now only for the dark underground in which they had been made. (n.p)

The story calls attention to the effects of illegal mining not only on the physical geography of the land but on the bodies of poor workers forced into the mines by economic needs. The description of the broken bodies of the miners portrays their pain and also acts to call attention to the relevant institutions that govern mining and exploitation. The physical presentation of the body as diseased, broken or missing some limbs is a commentary on the

postcolonial nation. This social and political commentary is best illustrated by Ken Barris's 2003 CP nominated story, "Clubfoot." Barris writes about a clubfooted child, Luke, who observes, from an innocent child's perspective, the physical and emotional violence experienced by his mother and how she manages to cope with this abuse in silence. The omniscient narrator notes:

> Early one evening, the man returned. It was his first visit that year […] His mother rose meekly and followed the man into her bedroom. They left the door open, so Luke clearly heard his voice raised, though he couldn't understand the language. He heard the wet stinging slap of flesh on flesh […] She came out towards evening [of the next day] and limped to the table, older now than her own father. She sat down, unable to break the silence. Her lips were fat, overripe, split. There were new colours on the palette of her face, shades of indigo and yellow, crimson and taupe. (Barris, "Clubfoot" 60)

In the story, the child's grandfather turns up at his daughter's house one day and this unexpected appearance triggers memories of a traumatic past: a past which reveals that the clubfooted child was born as the result of a rape. Luke's mother does not want her father to stay because he represents a constant reminder of a past that she had learnt to supress. As the story explains, Luke's mother decides to deal with the past by retreating into silence: a silence which says: "Nothing can be done. This is the cost of my life here, and of my motherhood. I make no choices: my life and death are indistinguishable" (60).

Towards the end of the story, however, the reader understands that this woman's past is not entirely buried but prevails in the present. In a dream, Luke watches his mother build a 'coffin' on the sand in front of their cottage. But as the little boy acknowledges, the older woman "was an inept craftsman, and the coffin kept falling apart" (58). In this way therefore, the writer acknowledges that silence and repression are inadequate in dealing with histories of violence. The remnants of the violence of apartheid are presented through the pain of the children who are a constant reminder that the troubled and violent past is yet to be forgotten and that it is still active and relevant in the present. Just as the ghosts of Luke's mother's past keep resurfacing to haunt her in the present, so are the ghosts of the colonial and apartheid history still present in the postcolony. It is a reminder to confront the history of violence once and for all or accept, as Luke's mother has done, that it is part of life. The clubfooted child, conceived in rape, is ever present in the story, waiting to be acknowledged. In this prize

narrative, therefore, Barris relies on the avenue provided by the CP to provoke a debate on the role of historical violence in the postcolony and as a constant reminder that the future generations will still have to deal with the consequences of the past. In his review of *Modern South African Stories* (Revised Selection) edited by Stephen Gray, Michiel Heyns describes "Clubfoot" as emblematic of "a post-Disgrace syndrome [a response to J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace*], a certain bleak awareness of the end of euphoria."[53] Barris further explores this theme in his 2010 CP shortlisted story, "The Life of Worm", which describes the paranoia that defines the post-apartheid nation and presents a constant reminder of the violence of the past haunting the present. Segun Afolabi, in "Monday Morning", also writes about a family running away from war and violence to Europe. They want to forget the past and start a new life. However, the mother's club, her severed hand, is a constant and glaring reminder of that past they desperately want to forget. The physical and mental pain is a symbol of the psychological crippling consequences of a history of violence.

War and the history of political violence in contemporary African prize stories has, therefore, contributed significantly in the spectacle of suffering. The description of the war field, refugee camps, survivors and victims has been framed within narratives of pain. As I will demonstrate further in the next chapter, the presence of child narrators in the prize stories has served an important function in cultural translations of historical realities on the continent. A child's point of view is necessarily innocent of ideological and historical matrices that guide the understanding of the socio-cultural and political contexts of the narratives. By relying on the child narrators, therefore, prize stories find it easier to universalise realities, where a reader without the background information on the story's context finds themselves in the same predicament as the child. However, I argue that the absence of historical and cultural contexts in the interpretation of these stories of death, disease and suffering has resulted in the pain becoming a fetish which gains value through the international literary award.

Pain and suffering as a literary currency

Writing about the Oprah Book Club, Rita Barnard and Eva Illouz have each foregrounded the prevalence of suffering in the book club selections as well as in the framing of the cultural institution that Oprah Winfrey has become, through the media industry. The American

[53] Online. Available at: http://www.michielheyns.co.za/documents/Modern%20South%20African%20Stories.pdf

daytime television host has played a significant role in influencing cultural and literary trends in the American contexts. Due to the global reach of the Oprah Winfrey TV show her influence has transcended the American geographical borders, allowing the TV personality to participate in the global cultural production industry. Her influence on literature has mainly been achieved through the Oprah Book Club which led her to being presented with the National Book Foundations' 50th-Anniversary Gold Medal in 1999. She has consequently been named as "the most powerful literary taste maker" (English 34). Illouz, in *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery* (2003), argues that "images of suffering are at least as important in the creation of a global public sphere and global consciousness as images of commodified happiness" (157). She argues that the TV show provides a setting for performing narratives of suffering and self-liberation.

Barnard, on the other hand, analyses the Oprah Book Club's globalisation of suffering from a South African perspective. She centres her argument on Allan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) which was the book club's September 2003 selection. In reference to the book club's selections, Barnard explores the process through which suffering is converted into a currency, exposing "the all-too-ready and mechanical way in which suffering is redeemed and incorporated into a self-help story" (93). It is also worth noting that one of the other major African books selected for the book club was Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them* (2008). Akpan's short story anthology, selected for the book club in September 2009, contains the CP shortlisted story, "My Parents' Bedroom", which narrates the dehumanising effect of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The stories in this anthology primarily focus on narratives about violence and have heavily relied on child protagonists. In one story, a street family in Nairobi is preparing for Christmas and they must find gifts to present to each other despite their poor economic status. In another, a brother and sister must find a way to escape from their uncle who is planning to sell them into slavery. The anthology also includes a short story about a Nigerian teenager on a night bus escaping the war in his home town only to be faced with more violence and death among the people he is seeking refuge from. In yet another story in the collection, set in Ethiopian, a young girl relates the effects of religious conflict, describing the tension and the killings. As demonstrated by the Oprah Book Club selections, suffering is a global commodity used to gain cultural currency especially for groups that have been historically dominated and oppressed. Suffering and pain become a spectacle that has been utilised by writers to give agency to pressing social and political realities on the continent.

Despite the stereotypical image of Africa that emerges in these stories of suffering, it is also important to note that the writers are writing against major and identifiable historical events. The common thematic issues such as war, disease and displacement foregrounded by the literary awards are social and political realities in Africa that do not exist only in the imagination of the writers. This dissertation is concerned with the process through which these violent and painful realities become the "single story" through which Africa is presented via the international prize industry.[54] The prize-winning works' overreliance on the history of domination and poverty in Africa has resulted in the creation of a literary currency characterised by the "aesthetics of suffering" (Brouillette 37).

Brouillette further explains that the themes of pain and suffering explored in many postcolonial texts "are not so much invented, but have instead been made into a 'coin', a literary currency as their stories are sold to a marketplace that traffics in an aesthetics of suffering" (37). By foregrounding these narratives through the prize institutions, the international award industry for African literature has provided the opportunity for writers to convert the post-colonial realities in Africa into a global currency that trades in cultural difference.

For instance, the 2009 CP nominated stories, "The End of Skill" by Mamle Kabu and "You Wreck Her" by Parselelo Kantai, creatively demonstrate the process through which different cultural products and other realities are converted into a currency and how they acquire value in the international cultural market. Kabu's story, first published in Helon Habila and Kadija Sesay's edited anthology, *Dreams, Miracles and Jazz: New Adventures in African Fiction* (2008), tells the experiences of an Adweneasa kente weaver who moves from the village to the city in search of wealth. Kweku, who adopts the name Jimmy when he moves to Accra city in Ghana, is a skilled kente weaver from a long lineage of professional weavers. Away from home Kweku "soon realised that kente cloth had taken on a new life in the big city" (Kabu 13). In the urban cosmopolitan town, the kente cloth had taken on a new value different from the cultural value traditionally attached to it. As the narrator explains, the cloth was culturally reserved for chiefs and other high ranking members of the royalty to wear to festivals. In the city, however, Kweku comes to realise that most of his customers use the cloth not only for decorative purposes but also for utilitarian purposes, as he learns from his African-American friend who wears a kente thong bikini and owns "several kente-patterned

[54] See Adichie's TED talk on "The Dangers of a Single Story" online at: http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en

items, which she had bought in America, including a backpack, a head tie and a dressing gown" (19).

The customers attached other cultural and symbolic values to the cloth and the weaver had to understand the different ways in which the cloth was received in order to maximise his profits. For instance, he had to become aware "of the issue of African-American heritage and its value on the kente market" so that he could capitalise on African-American tourists who interpreted owning different pieces of kente cloth as a form of gaining access to the African culture (19). One of the customers, referred to as the ambassador, used the cloth as a mat in his house, an act which is interpreted as taboo. Besides this, as the narrator explains his horror on seeing the beautifully woven cloth on the floor, "[i]n the centre of the cloth stood an exquisitely carved Asante stool upon which had been placed a collection of antique brass-cast gold weights" (23). The ambassador had called the kente weaver to his house because he was in need of another kente cloth to hang on his wall in order to "complete his 'Asante kingdom' display" (24). In a market mainly comprising of expatriate workers and tourists, the weaver encounters a situation where the kente cloth acquires new forms of value. In particular, ownership of the cloth creates a currency with which to gain access to 'authentic' African culture while the "'appropriated' 'object'" undergoes "a process of decontextualisation" (hooks 31). By demonstrating how the kente cloth gains and loses cultural value depending on the market, Kabu aligns herself with Arjun Appadurai's assertion in *The Social Life of Things* (1986) that "objects produced for aesthetic, ceremonial, or sumptuary use in small, face-to-face communities are transformed culturally, economically, and socially by the tastes, markets, and ideologies of large economies" (26). This short story shows how a cultural product is commodified, describing how the loss of cultural value for the kente translates into symbolic capital for the new owner.

Parselelo Kantai, on the other hand, demonstrates how social and political realities in Africa are converted to a cultural currency that continues to create stereotypes and inaccuracies about the continent. In the short story "You Wreck Her", which is a play of words based on the Greek word 'eureka' to mean 'I have found it', Kantai parodies the logic behind the 'discovery' of human beings – in this case the discovery of beauty queens by international modelling agencies. "You Wreck Her" is the story of a young woman desperate to make a living in Nairobi who is later 'discovered' by a Belgian photographer, Goort. Her 'discovery' leads her to become a model in Europe and America, but only for a short time, because her beauty only appeals to the audience for as long as there is war in her supposed country of

origin. Goort, who becomes the beauty queen's manager, converts the reality of war in Southern Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and other regions into a cultural currency in order to earn symbolic and economic value in the European fashion industry. In the short story, Kantai demonstrates the traffic in cultural otherness. After 'discovering' the beauty queen in Kenya, Goort repackages her by giving her a false history and identity, one that is marketable in the international cultural industry. As the second person narrator describes, the beauty queen was warned:

> you must remember that you are a child soldier from Sudan whom I discovered resting under a tree in Yei County, near the border and not having eaten in three days. He said you have to remember that. Also do not forget that your mother was raped by soldiers and got pregnant with you only to die in a hail of bullets at childbirth. He said drama was what would make the world love you, such a beautiful creature rescued from such ugliness. (Kantai 34)

As Kantai establishes in this short story that was first published in *St. Petersburg Review*, realities of war and poverty are converted into a sellable product for the international cultural market. The European manager, Goort, is involved in the commodification not only of cultural difference but of painful socio-political realities. Goort is described in the short story as a one eyed, one legged man. He lost his leg and eye in a motorcycle accident in the streets of Brussels. However, Goort knows that his story would not earn him any cultural or symbolic value in the entertainment or the fashion industry. So, he makes up a story to explain his accident which gives him a niche over other photographers and managers:

> Ven I am lying in ze hospital vizout ze leg, vizout ze eye, I say to myself zere no drama in motorcycle accident in Brussels so how I give myself ze drama. So I tink zat if I say zat I stepped on a landmine in eastern Congo, zen zere is ze drama in zat. And I tink again zat now I must come back to Africa looking for ze African beauty. How it can be so easy to put ze drama in ze beauty because in Europe zere is no drama any more. It is all pouff! (Kantai 34)

The attaching of value to certain features or socio-political and cultural realities as seen in the two CP stories explains the process of commodification. People, like the unnamed beauty queen, are packaged into commodities that appeal to the international market and cultural artefacts like the kente cloth acquire different values depending on the needs of the market. However, the value that is attached to cultural difference is never constant, as the beauty

queen in "You Wreck Her" realises. When the war ends in Sudan, the country from where the girl supposedly comes, the interest of the market in her wanes and her career comes to an end. The audience soon loses interest in tall and dark skinned models and move on to lighter skinned ones. As the story continues, the narrator, as well as many other dark skinned aspiring models, is forced to resort to skin lightening to satisfy the fetish of the sex and fashion industry. Kantai's short story, "You Wreck Her", clearly demonstrates the conscious effort of a character determined to create an exotic commodity out of social realities. As the narrator says of her 'discovery', her success in the beauty industry relied on exotic physical features and culture. To demonstrate, the first photo shoot that Goort organised for the model was carefully and consciously planned:

> He said you needed to look more African. So you went with him to the Maasai Market on a Tuesday afternoon and bought an armful of jewellery and the red and blue wraps and shawls, the *shukas* that made you so famous. You were surprised when at his house […] he whipped out his bush-knife and began ripping up the *shukas* [… then] he told you to strip down to nothing and to put on the torn *shukas* […] gave you a rusty old rifle and told you to stand under a tree and next to an old Mercedes whose tyres had been replaced with stones so that he could take an endless round of photographs. This is why in those early photographs of yourself in the fashion magazines, you are looking as if your mother has just died in a war-torn country. (Kantai 33)

The thematic focus in Kantai's story is echoed in Binyavanga Wainaina's "Ships in High Transit" in which one of the characters, Abdullahi, is described as having once possessed the features made fashionable by European romance and erotica novels but "[n]ow he is too old to appeal to the German blondes looking for excitement in a hooked nose, and cruel desert eyes" (Wainaina, "Ships" 220). As Abdullahi and the beauty queen discover, the aesthetics and values imposed on them through the cultural market are not constant, affirming Appadurai's (1986) views that "[c]ommodities, like persons, have social lives" (3). The value attached to certain realities like war or poverty are only valid as long as the market is still interested in converting it to marketable commodities as "[e]thnically marked materials and individuals become fetishised for public consumption, labelled 'authentic' and marketed to suit all pockets" (Santaolalla 10). "Ships in High Transit" explores the process of commodification that leads to valuing of people, objects or events as exotic commodities. This story employs different narrative points of view to demonstrate how the exotic value is

imposed on a character such as Abdullahi. Narrated in the third person with shifting focalisations, the reader views Abdullahi from the tour guide's eyes as well as from the tourists' eyes. The tourists describe their view from the car window on the ferry thusly:

> An old Arab man, with an emaciated face and a hooked nose, in a white robe, sitting on a platform above, one deformed toenail sweeping up like an Ali Baba shoe. A foot like varnished old wood, full of cracks. He is stripping some stems and chewing the flesh inside. There is a bulge on one cheek, and he spits and spits and spits all the way to the mainland. Brownish spit lands on some rusty metal, pools and trickles, slips off the side onto some rope that lies coiled on the floor […]The tourists' eyes are transfixed: somewhere between horror and excitement. How *real!* Must send a piece to *Granta*. (Wainaina, "Ships" 220)

From Matano the tour guide's perspective the character is first named and then described in the following way:

> Abdullahi is chewing miraa again, a son of Old Town society: banished son of one of the Coast's oldest Swahili families, who abandoned the trucking business for the excitement of sex, drugs, and Europop (had a band that did Abba covers in hotels, in Swahili, dressed in kanzus: Waterloo, niliamua kukupenda milele…). Now he is too old to appeal to the German blondes looking for excitement in a hooked nose, and cruel desert eyes. To the Euro-wielding market, there are no savage (yet tender) Arab sheiks in Mills and Boon romance books anymore; Arabs are now gun-toting losers, or compilers of mezze platters, or servers of humus, or soft-palmed mummy's boys in European private schools. There are no Abba fans under sixty, now that everyone listens to Eminem and Tupak. Now Abdullahi has become a backdrop, hardly visible in the decay and mouldy walls of Old Town, where he has gone back to live. (Wainaina, "Ships" 220)

He is no longer the Other. He is Abdullahi. At the end, the presence of Abdullahi is not invented, but is depicted from two perspectives: from an exotic as well as the non-exotic view confirming the ambivalence of the imposed value. Exoticism does not therefore emerge from the text. The exotic is what emerges from the interpretations of the readers; from the response of an audience guilty of creating a spectacle out of social and political realities like apartheid, genocide, civil war and HIV/AIDS. As Wainaina's example demonstrates, Abdullahi does not have exotic features – neither does the beauty queen in Kantai's story – but the exotic is

imposed on their bodies through the process of commodification of their physical features. It is an acknowledgement that value is not an inherent property but rather imposed by the cultural and economic market. As Appadurai notes in *The Social Life of Things* (1986), cultural and economic value emerges from the intersection of "demand, desire, and power" (4).

Manufacturing the exotic: the writer as interpreter for an imagined audience

In South African Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Elizabeth Costello* (2004), the main character, a writer, explores the position of the African writer in the global literary marketplace. While discussing African literature and audience, the fictional writer, Elizabeth Costello, makes the argument that:

> African novelists may write about Africa, about African experiences, but they seem to be glancing over their shoulder at foreigners who will read them. Whether they like it or not, they have accepted the role of interpreter, interpreting Africa to their readers. (51)

The position of the contemporary African writer is an important topic and has been raised by several critics including Pucherová, Huggan, Adesokan and Brouillette who engage the question of representation in literary works, especially through the canon. Brouillette (2007) argues that contemporary postcolonial writers have allowed themselves to be viewed as interpreters of the lands they represent by writing about major and identifiable historical events. She is of the opinion that postcolonial studies has resulted in a tendency to view these authors as "gatekeepers to a presumed authentic access" (25). These narratives and writers, authenticated through the international prize as a major institution of canon formation, are tasked with the role of speaking for others. However, this becomes problematic because it assumes a false universal that is being represented by a few individuals. Neil Lazarus, in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011), clearly demonstrates this complexity that arises through speaking for 'others', noting that:

> It is important to problematize representation and the issues around it where the writer's desire to speak *for* others – to endow 'them' with consciousness and voice – shades over into ventriloquisation, into speaking *instead* of 'them': what starts out as an attempt to speak on behalf of others, or at least about others (in the interest of

> 'putting them on the map') ends up, paradoxically, as a silencing of 'them' through the writer's own speech. (145)

Writing about postcolonialism and the creation of the exotic cultural and literary product, Graham Huggan, in *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001), decries the continued portrayal of literary works from postcolonial states as different, therefore needing to be translated and interpreted, arguing that this is the process that leads to the creation of the exotic. Huggan offers an extensive study of the process of commodification and Othering in postcolonial literature and defines exoticism as "a particular mode of aesthetic perception – one which renders objects, places and people strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery" (13). It is important, therefore, for literary critics to move away from the idea of viewing only a handful of writers who have achieved international recognition as automatically becoming the representatives as well as interpreters of where they comes from. The international prize institutions like the Caine or the Commonwealth, however, continue to provide a cultural space where prize-winners are viewed as representatives of their countries of origin or of the geographical regions associated with them. Wainaina's refusal to accept the 2007 Young Global Leader Award which is supported by the World Economic Forum demonstrates his rejection to being viewed as a representative. Huggan is of the opinion that:

> When creative writers like Salman Rushdie are seen, despite their cosmopolitan background, as representatives of Third World countries; when literary works like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) are gleaned, despite their fictional status, for the anthropological information they provide; when academic concepts like postcolonialism are turned, despite their historicist pretensions, into watchwords for the fashionable study of cultural otherness—all of these are instances of the *postcolonial exotic*. (vii)

In most cases, the writers who acquire the interpreter status are elevated above others from the same location through the international literary prize. In this case, therefore, the writer is assessed according to how representative they are of different regions that need to be understood by and in Western literary metropolitan centres. Timothy Brennan adds to this argument, suggesting that non-Western writers may be conveniently exploited as part of marketing strategies. Writing in *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997), Brennan notes that:

> Whenever they write, the banners 'India', 'Latin America', or 'Africa' are never out of sight. Being from 'there' in this sense is primarily a kind of literary passport that identifies the artists as being from a region of underdevelopment and pain. Literary sophistication against this troubled backdrop, then, is doubly authoritative because it is proof of overcoming *that* to join *this.* (38)

This image that the writers supposedly represent is what prompts Brouillette to argue against Roland Barthes's (1977) "death of the author" concept. In the introduction to the *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007), Brouillette notes that when it comes to postcolonial writers, the author is not dead; he/she is a marketing tool. This is an inversion of the idea that the author ceases to exist once the text gets published or of the idea that the author has no influence on how the readers interpret their work. As Brouillette argues, this inversion becomes necessary in the marketing of postcolonial cultural products because the writer plays a significant role in the distribution and consumption of literature. The authors become interpreters and translators of the lands they come from. In the prize industry, the writer is as important as the text. In fact, the writer and the text are mutually dependent on each other. The writer gains authentication from the text through the prize while the text benefits from the symbolic capital and cultural value of its creator. Citing the example of A.S. Byatt who won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1990 for her novel, *Possession: A Romance*, Richard Todd (1996) notes that after winning the prize, Byatt joined other winners for whom "nothing has been the same since" (27). Writing in *Consuming Fictions* (1996), Todd explains that following the awarding of the Booker to *Possession*, the writer went on to have higher commercial success even from her pre-Booker fiction noting that "post-*Possession* sales of the earlier fiction titles have in every case exceeded ten times the original hardback sales" (27-28). In general, therefore, when Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's CP story is interpreted as an insight into the Rwandan genocide, ignoring the powerful character portrayal in a story that demonstrates how different individuals react to pain and suffering; when Jenifer Makumbi Nansubuga's CWSSP story, "Let's Tell This Story Properly", is read with an anthropological lens to explain how stifling African cultures can become, and to discuss the problem of patriarchal domination, then these are all examples of writers being viewed as representatives of their cultures. Brouillette concludes that "postcolonial writers are undoubtedly attached to their texts, and in ways they do not necessarily sanction. This attachment is in part a requirement of the cosmopolitan function of the literature the industry traffics in" (176).

It is in this spirit of interpreting the exotic Other that the two prizes for this study are specifically named according to the regions they represent. The CP, which is linked to The Man Booker Prize both financially and symbolically, is consciously named The Caine Prize for *African* Writing and is unofficially termed as The African Booker, as I have previously mentioned. The second prize in this study, The Commonwealth Short Story Prize (*African* Region), not only displays the specific region of representation from its title, it also compresses the political history of the empire and its former colonies. In these prize organisations, representation becomes the overarching agenda not only at the moment of winning an award but also after the award, confirming Brouillette's hypothesis that

> [w]riters become representatives of their purported societies, 'cultures', nationalities, or subnationalities, transformed into all too singular embodiments of lengthy histories they can hardly hope to encompass. This happens not because writers are the market's passive dupes, but instead because of the historical development of and the convergence between the market position of postcolonial literatures and the market function of signature authorship. (70-71)

In this way, therefore, the interpretation leads to further exoticisation of African literature by trying to domesticate it for a Western audience. As Huggan writes, exoticism in its newly global guise ensures that "difference is appreciated, but only in the terms of the beholder; diversity is translated and given a reassuringly familiar aesthetic cast" (27). The process of interpretation of the culture of the Other in an effort to domesticate the unfamiliar and yet retain the strangeness, points to the fact that the exotic appeal in literary texts is a consciously produced and marketable quality. The "exotic is not a quality inherent to a given text but is instead the product of a specific mode of mass market consumption" (Huggan 16) in which the "beholder is the major participant" (Brouillette16). The prize-winning stories reflect not only the preoccupations of the writer but of the target reader as well.

In an article published by *The Times*, "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last", Aminatta Forna, one of the CP judges in 2006, praises the prize for promoting African literature. Forna writes: "Literary awards do work – look how the Caine Prize has boosted African writing!" adding that the prize has played an important role in the "resurgence" of African writing by "introducing it to a *Western audience*" (9). As a CP judge, Forna foregrounds the position of the reader, especially the Western reader, as the main audience for the contemporary African literature which is mediated through the international award institution.

The CWSSP, for instance, is structured to ensure that the writers are always conscious of the prize organisers as the primary audience of their works. As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, the CWSSP awards unpublished manuscripts and although the CP's regulations require the short stories to have been previously published before submission for the prize, trends over the years have demonstrated that some writers have learnt to publish in specific journals, magazines and anthologies in the hope that their works would be submitted for this prize competition. The Short Story Day Africa (SSDA), for instance, pegs their yearly literary competitions on the promise that the winning short stories would be automatically submitted for the CP. In fact, the 2014 Caine winning story, as well as one other shortlisted story, was initially published in the SSDA anthology *Feast, Famine and Potluck* (2013).[55] In a sense, therefore, the international prize has become a primary audience for these prize stories.

Analysing contemporary African writings, Akin Adesokan, in "New African Writing and the Question of Audience", maintains that contemporary African writers are influenced more by audience demands than a reflection of the realities on the ground. In a harsh critique of the postcolonial writer, Adesokan claims that "the representational process through which cultural capital is reproduced in certain postcolonial novels is an indication of what writers perceive to be the market of their works" (3). According to Adesokan, the contemporary African writer's perceived audience is usually identified with Western metropolises that own the means of production of literary works. Ironically, as Pascale Casanova confirms in *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), many of these metropolises have gained their cultural and symbolic value as a result of their history of domination. Casanova states: "London is, of course, along with Paris, the other great capital of the world literature, not only by virtue of its accumulated capital but also owing to the immensity of its former colonial empire" (116-7). In this sense, it is in the Western metropolises that the literary works on Africa are edited, published, marketed and awarded. Adesokan further argues that it is in these world capitals that "for all sorts of reasons, African otherness (or cultural difference in general) remains a serviceable idea. Not only are these works […] publicized mainly in Munich, London, and New York, the sense of this foreign reception is increasingly also integral to the process of their making, even when this occurs very far from a European or American site" *(*Adesokan, "New African Writing" 15-6).

[55] *Feast Famine and Potluck* (2013) is an anthology of the best 19 short stories from the 2013 Short Story Day Africa's writing competition. The title of the work is derived from the 2013 competition's annual theme which attracted a total of 68 stories from all over Africa and its diasporas.

In the effort to meet the demands of publication, prizes and the literary market in general, the contemporary African writer has been accused of continuing the stereotype of Africa as the Other by presenting it as an exotic commodity for foreign consumption. Huggan notes that this "suggests the view of African literature as primarily an export product, aimed at a largely foreign audience for whom the writer acts, willingly or not, as cultural spokesperson or interpreter" (34). Many of the winning stories are framed on gruesome social and political realities in Africa in what Akin Adesokan argues is a form of African writers pandering to the Western market's demands of the exotic. Adesokan opines that "the process of cultural politics through which symbolic capital is reproduced in postcolonial stories is a function of what writers perceive to be the market of their works" (Adesokan, "New African Writing" 1). His argument is that the contemporary writers narrate brutal events because they believe that it is what the western market wants to read.

However, the arguments of critics such as Huggan and Adesokan in regard to the audience are flawed in key respects because they are based on several misguided assumptions. The first assumption is that there is a clear demarcation between the reader and the writer. The second is that Africans do not read or at least they do not read African writers. The third is that the African writer only targets a Euro-American audience. Madhu Krishnan notes in *Contemporary African Literature in English* (2014) that the postulation that the reading public is a homogeneous group with clear demarcations "fails to grasp the complexity of cultural transmission and circulation" (37). Adesokan bases this argument on the question of language and lack of adequate publishing mechanisms and market for the local texts. As this dissertation establishes, the reality of digital publishing and co-publishing agreements between publishers in the global north and those on the African continent has ensured affordable and easy access to literary texts. These new publishing mechanisms have ensured a larger market for African literature on the continent thereby foregrounding the relevance of the African reader as a target audience. Adesokan's arguments also fail to consider the larger African diaspora as a market for African literature. As Krishnan explains, therefore, the question of the audience "cannot and does not exist within a simple binary of us and them, West and rest" because the relationship between the text, the author and the audience "is one which defies reduction to a single form of directionality" (Krishnan 37-8).

Michael Warner, in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002), underscores the fact that the idea of a public is constituted and that there is no homogeneous public but rather several intersecting, overlapping ones. For example, as much as an institution of literary consecration like the

Caine or Commonwealth prize speaks to a certain kind of person (e.g elite, Western, privileged, literate), the prize, through the very act of invoking such a person as reader, constitutes a new kind of public. In other words, following Warner (2002), literary prizes do not just frame and regulate at the point of production but also at the point of reception. The prize defines the reader of such stories as a particular kind of public, a person who recognises him/herself as belonging to this public. In this way, the production and consumption of the literary product, for a public, takes on "a performative dimension", from the perspective of both the writer as well as the reader (Warner 114). The reader's perspective is influenced by the prize selections while the writer is, to a certain degree, influenced by the need to fit within the market or prize demands. Brouillette argues that exoticism and fetishism in literary production "is a consumer behaviour characterized by a reading community's desire to achieve 'access to the cultural other', as well as its complicity in the mystification and reification of that same other's seemingly authentic experiences" (15). Writers, however, are usually aware of the expectations of the audience in what Brouillette defines as authorial self-consciousness, a topic I explore in details in the next chapter. I argue that the prize industry as a canonising agency has played a significant role in influencing how texts are received by the reading public. As this chapter reveals, the international prize industry has influenced the consumption cultures in contemporary African literature by continually foregrounding narratives of pain and suffering. The award sector has provided a platform for the production of the literature of spectacle by imposing value on socioeconomic and political realities such as civil wars, genocide, HIV/AIDS and death.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the literary prize industry as the mediating institution which continues to ensure a foregrounding of the aesthetics of pain in the contemporary African literature. The chapter identifies and focuses on the centrality of narratives of pain and suffering in prize-winning narratives, investigating the process through which social and political realities on the continent like civil war, colonialism and apartheid, disease and poor political leadership become the single story through which Africa is narrated in the international literary market. It further explores the process through which contemporary African literature, mediated through the international prize, acquires value in the global literary market. I have relied on the theorisations of critics such as Brouillette and Appadurai to explore the process through which pain and suffering become a currency that is trafficked

in the global literary scene. The analysis of these prize stories explain the ways in which cultural difference is politicised, but as the process of commodification clearly illustrates, "cultural difference also has an aesthetic value, a value often measured explicitly or implicitly in terms of the *exotic*" (Huggan 13). To reiterate Huggan's definition, exoticism stems from the global commodification of cultural difference. Exoticism occurs when the difference in culture, people, history, etc. is commodified and made into a literary currency.

The effects of economic and political patronage in African literary production are reflected on the prize stories, revealing how literature is influenced by the cultural production industry. However, as Richard Todd's (1996) examination of the Booker Prize in the context of the cultural commodity industry demonstrates, "individual case studies are presented as *performances*: they [the texts] may be seen as representing attempts to define (or redefine) their existence as consumer products" (67). In this regard, therefore, the next chapter builds on the prize narratives of pain and suffering by investigating each winning story as a performance within the wider literary production industry. It seeks to explore not only the thematic contexts of the stories but the different literary strategies employed by the writers aiming against the stereotypical homogenising definition of contemporary African literature as a literature of pain and suffering. It acknowledges that political and economic patronage has resulted in a literature that tries to fit within the market demands which is driven by the need for the exotic. This argument aligns with Krishnan's view that "writers in a global literary marketplace both challenge and are constrained by the conventions mediating the reception of postcolonial literatures" (3). Through close readings of different short stories, I illustrate the fact that the writers are not passive actors in the process that represents their literature as marginalised. The analyses of the prize stories show that many of the writers are aware of their global position as postcolonial writers and sometimes they consciously employ the narratives of pain and suffering to give agency to certain social, historical and political realities on the continent. The next chapter expands on the idea of the writers' conscious positioning in the award industry to explore the different ways in which they align themselves to the market demands. It also hinges on Brouillette's and Huggan's ideas of authorial self-consciousness and strategic exoticism as evidenced through the prize-winning entries.

CHAPTER 5

Towards De-exoticisation: Writing in the Consciousness of Marginality

Introduction

The previous chapter explored the concept of pain and suffering as a literary currency in the award sector. I focused on the efforts aimed at positioning this literature of pain at the global literary market, illustrating the process through which it gains value and acquires the exotic label through the international literary prize. This chapter relies on the idea of "strategic exoticism" or "authorial self-consciousness", as expounded by Graham Huggan (2001) and Sarah Brouillette (2007) respectively, to demonstrate how it is employed by postcolonial writers in a form described as engaging in the performance of the exotic. In this regard, I read the prize narratives within the lenses of "strategic exoticism" in order to reflect a writing that is conscious of its marginality. Gayatri Spivak, in "Poststructuralism, Marginality and Value", explains that marginalised Others have learnt to inhabit the codes that have previously been labelled as exotic in order to criticize them. bell hooks focuses on the need, for those who have been classified as the Other, to embrace that classification as it affords them an opportunity to speak instead of being spoken to and about. hooks argues in "Marginality as Site of Resistance" that "[m]arginality [is a] central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse […Marginality is] a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternative, new worlds" (341).

Subverting exoticism by inhabiting it fully, therefore, becomes a form a resistance and this chapter shows how some of the prize-winning writers avail themselves to this strategy. I explore marginality and 'strategic exoticism' by investigating how the writers rely on form and content as a currency in a literary market that traffics in the exploitation of Otherness. The chapter reveals a variety of prize stories' experimentation with different styles and formats that range from the employment of first-person narrators to epistolary, diary entries and journalistic essays to sci-fi and oral narratives. I focus on the centrality of the child narrator, magic realism, and orality in the prize narrative in order to illustrate how the writers have embraced styles and genres that have previously been categorised as exotic or marginal, in an effort to gain visibility at the international award scene. The chapter extends on Njabulo Ndebele's (1991) discussion on the literature of spectacle, introduced in the previous chapter,

further expanding on his proposed methodology for the "rediscovery of the ordinary." While the previous chapter demonstrated the process through which the exotic quality is imposed on a literary text, I introduce here the practice of de-exoticisation, relying on different literary strategies employed in the prize-winning stories. The chapter is involved with the practices deployed by contemporary African writers as a conscious deconstruction of power hierarchies in the global literary production sector.

The prize-winning stories' focus on the representations of marginality aims to not only assert the voice of the marginal postcolonial writer through Western based and funded prize organisations, but to also deconstruct the power relations that determine the production and consumption of literary and cultural products in the postcolony by showing that the writers are engaged in a practice of "persistent solipsism or self-consciousness" as a strategy aimed towards achieving both symbolic and cultural value in the wider literary market (Brouillette 5). The prize stories have employed different styles and strategies in their presentation of marginality which reveals that although marginality describes the position of the oppressed or the powerless, the position is not made up of a homogenous group.

Contemporary writers and authorial self-consciousness

Pascale Casanova, in *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), recognises the struggle faced by writers from the cultural 'peripheries', an angle that is later taken up and expanded by postcolonial literary critics such as Huggan and Brouillette through their ideas on strategic exoticism and authorial self-consciousness, respectively. In an analysis of literary dominations and dependencies, Casanova explains that:

> In order to achieve literary existence, to struggle against the invisibility that threatens them from the very beginning of their careers, writers have to create the conditions under which they can be seen. The creative liberty of writers from peripheral countries is not given to them straight away: they earn it […] by inventing complex strategies that profoundly alter the universe of literary possibilities. The solutions that little by little are arrived at […] are the product of compromise; and the methods that they devise for escaping literary destitution become increasingly subtle, on the levels both of style and of literary politics. (177)

This firmly demonstrates that postcolonial writers are usually aware of the marginal space in which they have been confined to in the literary marketplace; that the writers may be aware of the audience who is looking to understand or interpret cultural difference and as Huggan illustrates:

> Postcolonial writers/thinkers, it could be said, are both aware of and resistant to their interpellation as marginal spokespersons, institutionalised cultural commentators and representative (iconic) figures. What is more, they make their *readers* aware of the constructedness of such cultural categories; their texts are metacommentaries on the politics of translation, on the power relations that inform cross-cultural perception and representation. (26)

This awareness is perhaps best illustrated by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whose short stories have previously been nominated for both the CP as well as the CWSSP. Adichie was among the writers who attended the first CP writing workshop which was held in 2003 in South Africa. One of her short stories, "Jumping Monkey Hill", initially published in *Granta* and later included in her anthology, *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), is a metafictional narrative in which she discusses the concept of creative writing workshops and the patronage that sometimes frame this process of literary production and canonisation. In this short story, Adichie explores the unevenness of the distribution of economic and cultural capital and its effects on the literary text. It tells of a fictionalised creative writing programme for African writers that is organised, directed and funded by the British Council. The story is set in South Africa and narrates the experiences of different fictionalised writers in a creative writing workshop in which they are all expected to write about African realities in order to have their stories published internationally. The narrative, told in the first-person, follows the life of a young Nigerian woman, Ujunwa, who, together with her writer colleagues, struggles to negotiate the patronage that comes not only from the moderators of this workshop but also from the funding organisation. One of the writers composes a story about witchcraft and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe and Edward, the workshop leader, dismisses it saying "there was something terribly passé about it when one considered all the other things happening in Zimbabwe under the horrible Mugabe" (107). Ujunwa decides to write about her personal experiences in Nigeria trying to get a job but also having to contend with the realities of sexual harassment at the work place. The workshop leader, again, dismisses the story as implausible while terming the personal experiences of the Senegalese woman trying to deal

with the death of her lesbian lover as un-African because "homosexual stories of this sort weren't reflective of Africa" (107).

Adichie's short story offers an opportunity for a materialist reading of the culture within which a text is located, by exploring the influence of the modes of cultural production on the text. The story embodies the effects of power and domination in cultural production for, as Bourdieu notes in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), "domination no longer needs to be exerted in a direct, personal way when it is entailed in possession of the means (economic and cultural capital) of appropriating the mechanisms of the field of production and the field of cultural production, which tend to assure their own reproduction by their very functioning, independently of any deliberate intervention by the agents" (183–4). "Jumping Monkey Hill", therefore, acts as an acknowledgment of the role played by the creative writing institution in the production of literature as a commodity that needs to fit within the market demands. I argue that the unequal power relation that exists in the production of literary commodities results into the objectification and commodification of the literary works produced. Further, English acknowledges that "the investment of foreign symbolic capital in emergent symbolic markets has been seen […] as a means of sustaining less overtly and directly the old patterns of imperial control over symbolic economies and hence over cultural practice itself" (298). The Commonwealth Prize, for instance, is a constant reminder of the history of the systems of political domination by imperial Britain and these forms of domination seem to have continued through the production of cultural and symbolic economies as demonstrated through the prize.

In Adichie's story, the setting of the writers' workshop is described as strategic, aiming to present an exotic culture ranging from the description of the architecture of thatch roofed cabins with names like "Baboon Lodge and Porcupine Place" hand-painted beside wooden doors, to the food served that intended to reflect an 'authentic' African culture. Adichie's depiction of the fictional workshop setting echoes Nick Elam's description of the different settings for the Caine Prize African Writing Workshop. Elam was the CP Administrator from inception to 2011. In the introduction to the 2010 CP anthology, he defines that year's workshop location as: "the incomparable surroundings of the Gellmann Conservancy at Ol Ari Nyiro in Laikipia Province, Kenya, where impala, elephant and even lion showed close interest in the proceedings and a puff adder settled right by the entrance to the workroom" (6-7). This description followed the one he gave of the 2006 workshop setting, and reprinted in the Introduction to the 2005 CP anthology, *The Obituary Tango*:

> This year saw the fourth of our workshops for African writers, which we held for the second time at Crater Lake, near Naivasha, in Kenya. We thought it right to keep faith with Crater Lake – a tented camp inside the rim of an extinct volcano, isolated, tranquil, beautiful, just an ideal venue for a workshop – despite the brutal killing in July 2005 of its manager and co-owner, John Goldson. His successor and the devoted staff looked after us superbly. They relished the writers' presence and could be espied listening behind the scenes to our readings in the evenings and devouring transcripts in their off-duty moments. (7)

What emerges from the prize-winning narratives' metacommentaries is an awareness of the process of exoticisation and the role played by the institutions of canon formation in influencing the production of Otherness in literature. In the production and marketing of a literature marked by the aesthetic of pain, as Patrick Denman Flanery demonstrates in *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa* (2012), "the author, even the critically lauded and globally garlanded author, ultimately is not, and cannot be, entirely in control of his own text(s)" (20). The socio-political environment plays a major role in influencing the literary production. James English (2005) avers that there are different forces that influence the production, distribution and consumption of a literary product within the local and the global market. The regulations imposed by the prize organisation as well as the publisher who plays a major function in the creation of the contemporary African literary canon ensure that the social production of the literature is always often reflected in the literature itself. The text becomes a commodity that needs to fit within the market demands. The exoticism in a text, therefore, results from a conscious construction facilitated by the different structures of literary production extending from the point of publishing to awarding the text. As James English's contends:

> The production of cultural value is always politicized. Cultural value cannot emerge in the absence of social debts and obligations. Its production is always a social process. Neither can it emerge in a political vacuum, the participants uncoloured by and indifferent to prevailing hierarchies of class, race, gender, or nation; its production is always politicized. (27)

The literary product becomes a reflection of the different systems of power at play and what emerges from this short story's metacommentaries is a writer's awareness of the global positioning of postcolonial literature as well as the frameworks through which this literature

is produced. It confirms Bourdieu's (1977) thesis on power and domination through the control of the means of cultural production. The Caine and the Commonwealth prizes continue to be international literary prizes whose main function is to create an African literary canon. The power relations between the funding organisation and the literary artists, most of whom are new and upcoming Africa-based writers, is exposed, demonstrating that the text will always be influenced by the material conditions of its production considering that "[t]here is no evading the social and political freight of a global award at a time when global markets determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies" (English 298).

However, as Abdulrazak Gurnah demonstrates in "Imagining the Postcolonial Writer", the previously marginalised writer has learnt to inhabit the codes of marginalisation for his/her own benefit. He notes:

> Postcolonial writers are adept at manipulating the commercial codes of the international open market. They recognize that the value of their writing as an international commodity depends, to a large extent, on the exotic appeal it holds to an unfamiliar metropolitan audience. (275)

This awareness is what Brouillette (2007) refers to as "authorial self-consciousness," comparing postcolonial literary production to the tourism industry, arguing that "[l]ike the business of tourism, any postcoloniality industry depends upon the very marketability of self-consciousness about the production and consumption of what circulates within it" (7). To illustrate, Binyavanga Wainaina's short story, "Ships in High Transit", demonstrates the writer's awareness of the circulation of value in the cultural and literary marketplace. It was written during the first Caine Prize for African Writers Workshop in 2003 and first published in the Caine anthology, *Discovering Home* (2003). This story explores the concept of authorial self-consciousness in a narrative about tourism in Kenya and the performance of an 'authentic' culture. The narrative explores the aesthetics of the tourism industry where the tourists' search for the exotic and authentic leads crafty business owners to pay local people to become pretend Maasais for the benefit of the tourists. The business also includes crafting an imagined history and culture that would attract the tourists who are looking for an exotic culture. The tour firm owner, a European who has settled in Kenya, adopts the Maasai culture and even changes his name from Shanks to Um-Shambalaa. Wainaina describes him as "a noble savage", a parody of the fetishism of non-European cultures (Wainaina, "Ships" 218). Shanks not only hires pretend Maasais, he also goes ahead to hire professional woodcarvers

whom he places deep within the Maasai land and through them, weaves a complicated history claiming that:

> Thousands of years ago, in the great Maa Empire, Maa-saa-i-a, a great carver lived […] When the Maa-saa-i-a empire fell apart, after a great war with the Phoenicians, over trade in frankincense and myrrh, the remaining Maa scattered to the winds. Some left for the South, and formed the great Zulu nation, others remained in East Africa, impoverished, but noble. Others fought with Prester John, and others became noble gladiators in Rome.
>
> The great Carver, Um-Shambalaa, vanished one night in the Ngong Hills, betrayed by evil spirits who had overwhelmed the ancestors. He waits for the Maa to rise again. (218)

Conveniently, Shanks renames himself as Um-Shambalaa to fit into the narrative in an effort to appeal to the tourists who are always "looking for something real", something exotic (224). These characters 'pretend' to be Maasai for the sole reason of attracting the tourists who only interpret Kenya through the commodification and exoticisation of the Maasai culture. In this tourism business, the characters, like postcolonial authors, have learnt the formulae of packaging culture in versions that attract the Western market. As the expression 'turning sails to the wind' imply, the characters in "Ships in High Transit" have learnt to grab at opportunities from which ever direction the wind might blow. They have learnt about strategic exoticism as a means of achieving their economic and social goals.

The concerns expressed by Wainaina in this short story are echoed in the 2001-2002 CWSSP winning story, "Isaiah's Alphabet", by Michel Lambert. The story starts with a student, Isaiah, returning home from the university. His mother enquires about his studies and Isaiah teaches her some of the Greek mythologies and the alphabet that he has learned at the university. His mother is excited about learning and shares her new found knowledge with her neighbours. Twenty years later there is a conference at the university and Isaiah, now the Minister for Culture, is invited. Among the presenters is a professor of Comparative Orature who announces that

> she had definite proof that the Zulus had influenced the Greeks of the archaic period […] As proof, she produced translated versions of oral Zulu stories with remarkable similarities to episodes in Homers' Iliads, and Odyssey. She also played a tape

> recording of a song performed by Zulu women during the annual rituals in the honour of the Zulu fertility goddess […] as the recorded voice of an old woman chanted 'alpha, beta, gamma, delta…' (Lambert n.p)

From this prize-winning story, it is clear that Isaiah, now the Minister for Culture, has deliberately influenced the outcome of the research. His mother is one of the respondents in the research that concludes that the history of the Zulu is connected to the history of the Greeks. The mother's stories of the Zulus are influenced by what she has learnt about the Greek mythologies and history from her son. The Zulu song that incorporates the Greek alphabet has been learnt from Isaiah. The actions of the Minister for Culture demonstrate a conscious effort to inhabit the cultural centres through strategic exoticism. Huggan argues that postcolonial authors have learnt the art of packaging marketable versions of their societies through literature while Brouillette contends that the author's consciousness of their position as postcolonial writers ultimately affects the works they produce. I rely on the concepts of authorial self-consciousness and strategic exoticism to argue for a recuperation of agency through the prize narratives of pain and suffering.

The spectacle of pain and suffering: recuperation of agency

The continuing foregrounding of the narratives of pain through the international award scene demonstrates a conscious effort by literary producers to convert the social and political realities like violence into a global literary currency. However, as Hommi K. Bhabha (1994) notes, the ideological construction of the Other is not fixed. Writing in "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism", Bhabha explores the ambivalence of the construction of the Other arguing that "[t]he analytic of ambivalence questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination" adding that a "reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of *the processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse" (67). Borrowing on Bhabha's reading of postcolonial literature, I argue against the interpretation of narratives of pain and suffering in prize-winning works in a fixed gaze.

While the prize winning stories in both the Caine and Commonwealth competitions have continued to foreground the aesthetics of pain by focusing on the social, economic and

political realities such as violence and disease, I argue that the styles of representation have differed from one writer to another. One of these perspectives is the strategic deployment of different literary devices in the aim of urging the reader to consider multiple interpretations of the prize narratives. In "Jumping Monkey Hill", for instance, the story engages with the reader both at the thematic as well as at the stylistic level, demonstrating authorial self-consciousness in the production of the 'authentic' and the 'exotic'. The text demonstrates the effects of patronage, especially economic patronage, on literary production. Adichie presents the story of Ujunwa's as a frame story within the larger narrative of the creative writing workshop. She uses the style of a story within a story to project two independent narratives within one. While the main story talks about the workshop and the patronage that the writers have to contend with in order to get published, the embedded narrative is about the personal experiences of one of the workshop attendants. The embedded story is the one that Edward, the workshop leader, termed as implausible, accusing the writer of agenda writing. Through this narrative style, the story confronts the realities of patronage but also demonstrates the various strategies employed by writers in an effort to achieve global visibility. This style is also evident in Adichie's prize-winning novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), which employs the narrative trope of a book within a book. The different sections in the novel are presented from the focal point of various characters who contextualise their different realities of the Biafran War. Snippets of the underlying narrative, initially referred to as "The Book", are inserted in different sections of the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is not until the end of the novel that it is revealed that "The Book" is titled "The World Was Silent When We Died" and it is the story of the Biafran war as told from the perspective of one of the characters, Ugwu, the houseboy and later the child soldier. In the context of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, this narrative strategy contributes in raising questions about the ownership of narratives and literary representations. Through paratextuality, the writer demonstrates how writing can become a tool for visibility, guiding readers against a singular interpretation of text. Adichie demonstrates the African writers' awareness to the exotic gaze not only through the thematic context of the short story but also through different stylistic devices.

Writing in *Contemporary African Literature in English* (2014), Madhu Krishnan notes that although on the one hand "authors may be seen to unconsciously (or not) conform to the expectations of a Western readership of 'How to Write About Africa', internalizing and reproducing the exotic mythologies of the former colonizing powers" (29), it is important to realise that that this literary text may also "encode a resistant function, destabilizing and

appropriating these vestiges of exoticism" (29-30). This resistance is sometimes manifested in the choice of narrative styles. While the beauty queen in Kantai's "You Wreck Her" (CP 2009) may have been initially unaware of the conscious production of exoticism that played out on her body and in her life, contemporary writers are not necessarily blind to the process of exoticisation and may, in fact, be complicit actors in this process, aiming towards strategic exoticism. For instance, the second person focalisation used in "You Wreck Her" is effective in immersing the reader into the consciousness of the main character, revealing the self-awareness of the beauty queen regarding her position as a cultural commodity. The writer makes a deliberate narrative choice and this makes the story more immediate, engaging with the audience directly as the reader is forced to become the interlocutor. This narrative focus is a technique for self-interrogation; the narrator is reliving the process through which she was converted into a cultural commodity. The narrator is aware of the mechanisms and strategies employed to convert her body and culture into a cultural commodity. The continued displacement of subject positioning by the second person narrator in this prize story presents a narrative that is metafictionally aware of its positioning within the global literary commodity market. While Kantai deploys the second person narrator, Wainaina's "Ships in High Transit" engages with the plurality of narrative foci in a short story that aims at displacing the singular interpretation of a literary text. In the story, the third-person omniscient narrator constantly shifts focus to the different characters in order to demonstrate the process of literary exoticisation. This literary strategy is also used to raise questions regarding the interpretations of text for, as Krishnan asserts, "[e]mbedded texts, self-conscious narrators and shifts in voice function together to highlight the contingency of narrative as a communicative act and to render a single reading of the text impossible" (143). The prize narratives for both the Caine and Commonwealth competitions have employed diverse literary styles in what I argue is a conscious effort against homogenisation and to displace the singular literary interpretation.

However, despite the multiplicity of literary styles, the thematic concerns in these stories, as the analyses of the texts in this dissertation illustrate, are not varied and they are primarily engaged with violence, disease and death. Zoë Norridge in *Perceiving Pain in African Literature* (2013) provides an extensive study detailing the ethics and aesthetics of writing and interpreting pain in African literary expressions. Norridge argues that expressing or writing about pain is an assertion of the right to self-representation; to speak one's own pain in one's own words. To interpret the representations of pain in award winning works as only

the self-serving act of writers who marginalise or exoticise themselves for the benefit of a prize "forms yet another silencing of suffering" (4). She further adds that "whilst stereotypical representations of African suffering are indeed a serious issue, African writers themselves repeatedly assert that their own artistic practices work against such homogenisation" (4).

Writing in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1991), Ndebele argues that to re-discover the ordinary in literary representations, there is need to steer away from the fetish of the spectacular. To demonstrate the process of re-discovery of the ordinary, or de-exoticisation, it is imperative to conduct a comparative analysis of how different texts have presented certain socio-political and economic realities in Africa. For instance, Uwem Akpan and Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's Caine Prize stories are both about the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Akpan's "My Parents' Bedroom" was shortlisted in 2007 and Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's "Weight of Whispers" was the fourth short story to win the Caine Prize. As demonstrated in chapter four of this dissertation, "My Parents' Bedroom" is set within Rwanda and is told from the point of view of a child. Akpan uses vivid visual images of blood soaking through the walls, rape, arson and death, which, to borrow from Ndebele's postulations, is a perfect description of the spectacularisation of violence. Owuor, on the other hand, writes about the same topic but choses to shift the narrative setting both geographically and historically. In "Weight of Whispers", a royal family has managed to escape from the genocide and they end up as refugees in a neighbouring country, Kenya. The narrator, a former prince, tells of his family's flight from Rwanda at the beginning of the genocide and their life as refugees in Kenya, exposing the corruption in the government which contributes to further dehumanisation of the asylum seekers. By focusing on the story of the displaced royal family, the writer manages to engage with the question of the international community's response to the Rwandan genocide. The story is narrated from the first person point of view and keeps shifting from one geographic location and time setting to another, the end result being a historical, political and cultural contextualisation of the genocide. The story of the Rwandan genocide, therefore, takes a political and historical perspective. By depicting the context of the war, the writer takes part in the process of de-exoticisation, aiming at the re-discovery of the ordinary.

The post-2000 economic crisis in Zimbabwe has also been widely documented in the prize stories. NoViolet Bulawayo's 2011 Caine winning story, "Hitting Budapest", is set in Zimbabwe during the economic meltdown. The story relies on children protagonists to exhibit the devastating effects of the crisis which resulted in migrations as well as hunger and

destitution for those left behind. The children characters in this story live in a poor part of town known as Paradise and hunger forces them to search for fruits and berries in the wealthy suburbs where most of the home owners have immigrated to South Africa and to America. In the story, the economic problems have also resulted in the breakdown of the social norms exposing the children to different sexual and emotional violations. One of the children is pregnant after being raped by her grandfather. Alexander Kanengoni's story is also set in Zimbabwe during the same historical period. In his "Chikwanha's Haunting Eyes" (CWSSP 2001-2002)**,** the effects of the failing economy are presented through the devastation of HIV/AIDS. Kanengoni attempts to link the poverty, especially in the rural areas with the increased infections and death as a result of the HIV virus. This is a bleak story that presents no escape since almost everyone is infected and waiting to die. Despite these images of post-2000 Zimbabwe, Brian Chikwava presents a counter narrative which does not aim to deny the socioeconomic realities but purposes to de-spectacularise poverty and poor leadership. Chikwava's "Seventh Street Alchemy" which won the Caine in 2004 moves away from the fetishes of pain and suffering by developing characters who are not just passive recipients of poor leadership but are conscious of the idea of human resilience and resistance. He develops characters such as Fiso, the "fifty-two-year-old quasi-prostitute with thirty-seven teeth and a pair of six-inch heeled perspex platform shoes", who fights to be recognised by the government as well as by the society (10). As the narrator describes, for Fiso, "[i]t has been decades since she realised that, armed with a vagina and a will to survive, destitution could never lay claim to her. With these weapons of destruction she has continued to fortify her liberty against poverty and society" (10).

Indeed, Grace Musila notes in "Between Seventh Street, Goblins and Ordinary People" that Chikwava's story "portrays ordinary people's lives with a buoyant humour that is a fitting tribute to their creative acts of surviving annihilating circumstances and transgressing rigid state structures" (142). Despite the economic crisis that frames this prize story, Musila adds, the text "gently ventilates the absurdities and tragic realities of these lives, whilst insisting on celebrating their spirit and their powerful will to live" (142). At the end, Chikwava does not only depict a story of pain and suffering in Zimbabwe, he uses the political and economic realities as an agency to depict the resilience of the people and the will to survive.

As Huggan argues, therefore, narratives of pain and suffering "may be receded to serve different, even contradictory, political needs and ends" (13). On the same note, he adds, "in a postcolonial context, exoticism is effectively *repoliticised*, redeployed both to unsettle

metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power" (ix-x). The text engages with the question of power and domination by relying on the symbol of pain as a double edged sword in contemporary African literature. These narratives are not only involved in the exhibition of violence but are also involved in trying to offer different alternatives of dealing with the key problems of the postcolonial nation.

Norridge, in *Perceiving Pain in African Literature* (2013), observes that different "critics perceive the topic of literary pain narratives as yet another homogenising Western stereotype of Africa as an 'underdeveloped' nexus of violence and death" (3-4). In this chapter, I call for a reading of contemporary African narratives of pain and suffering within the frameworks of the cultural institutions that participate in their production. These stories must be interpreted within the larger context of literary production structures such as publishing and award institutions. As the analysis of the mechanisms of literary production prove, the contemporary African writer "is caught within a situation in which, through the demands of publishing and the desire for a wide readership, certain aesthetic forms are tacitly endorsed as more valuable, and therefore more apt for consumption, than others" (Krishnan 137). In this context, it is the aesthetics of pain and suffering mediated through the production structures such as publishing and prize industries. While many critics have labelled such stories as stereotypical and exotic, I call for a wider interpretation of the role of pain and suffering in contemporary African literature. This dissertation contends that the frame of pain and suffering can be, and is fully exploited in all its testimonial and critical capacities by writers; the frame exercises a deterministic role that writers routinely resist or exploit fully, often in subtle ways as the analysis of literary styles reveals here.

Narrative point of view: employing the marginal characters

As highlighted in the previous chapters, many of the prize stories are narrated by, or are about, characters in the peripheries. These stories are populated with narratives about marginal characters that are presented as voiceless, faceless and unknown. Dobrota Pucherová notes of the Caine: "[the] protagonists are typically people living on the margins of society – refugees, exiles, social exiles, emigrants, prisoners, or street children – whose African identity is often ambivalent, subject to negotiation and under threat" (20). In this context, therefore, the contemporary African short story is told through the eyes or the voice

of naïve characters, children, social misfits and outcasts; characters whose voices are either supressed or silenced by virtue of being on the margins. More than half of the winning stories from both the CP and CWSSP are told in the first-person narrative voice while many others still put emphasis on the naïve omniscient narrator in a strategy that, I argue, seeks to frame the prize story within a marginalised space. In this perspective the focus is not only on the emphasis placed on the focalization of the narratives but also on the important role played by the coming-of-age narratives in postcolonial prize literature.

The reason for reliance on child protagonists is to articulate the experience of social and political marginalisation and, as Stephen Morton notes in *Marginality: Representations of Subulternity, Aboriginality and Race* (2010), the figure of the marginal character

> is a powerful rhetorical device precisely because it gives voice to subaltern histories in order to persistently question the disempowerment of subaltern peoples in the contemporary era of neo-liberal globalisation. Such rhetorical devices exemplify the way in which the aesthetic strategies of many postcolonial texts concerned with marginality are always also connected to a struggle for social and political empowerment. (179)

The employment of child narrators/protagonists and the coming-of-age narratives have been common in most of the prize-winning stories: not only in the Caine and Commonwealth prizes, but in other local and international literary awards. However, this style is not restricted to prize-winning stories, and Morton (2010) correctly adds, this genre is "increasingly prevalent in postcolonial literature" (166). This increasing focus on the child protagonist and growing-up narratives has been explained by Pheng Cheah in *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (2003) as an effort by the writers to reflect the state of the recently decolonised with the development of the protagonists.

The large number of coming-of-age narratives in the prize stories also raises another significant question in the process of literary production in Africa. Many of these prize stories are written and published outside the continent by writers based in the diaspora. Jean Starobinski writes in "The Idea of Nostalgia" that the "literature of exile, more abundant than ever, is, for the most part, a literature concerned with the loss of childhood" (qtd. in Walder 116). Starobinski confirms that writing from the diaspora engages memory and childhood as a common style. This perhaps also explains why most of the prize stories are concerned with

the space of childhood and growing-up narratives, mainly focusing on loss at familial, political and historical levels.

Geoff Hill, a Zimbabwean journalist and writer based in London, was shortlisted for the 2000-2001 CWSSP for his story, "Independence Day." This is a narrative laden with nostalgic longings for home by the older members of a Zimbabwean family that has migrated to Britain. Hill tells of a family whose elders are in constant yearning for a home that the children cannot identify with. On the other hand, Emmanuel Dongala, who was shortlisted for the CP in 2003 with "Ouagadougou", also takes the reader back to childhood days in Congo-Brazzaville where a child is learning about his family history and the world in general. The child narrator finds an old colonial map in his grandfather's study and is fascinated with the colonial borders and the history of violence and oppression associated with colonialism and domination. He is most curious about Ouagadougou and wants to travel there one day to learn about its rich history before colonisation by Europe. This preoccupation with childhoods by African writers in the diaspora, Salman Rushdie argues in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), is as a result of the writers being "haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back" towards their origins, and from memory they create "imaginary homelands", homelands of the mind (10). By telling stories of individual passages and triumphs from childhood into adulthood, the writers critique the past and present alternative futures in the context of power and domination on the continent.

The winning stories from the CWSSP and the CP reflect an emphatic focus on the position of the child to narrate the contemporary realities of Africa because readers tend to be more accepting of a child rather than an adult who verbalises certain uncomfortable or controversial realities in the society. This is mainly because the child is a keen observer who does not usually pass judgment. The child narrator/protagonist also occupies that in-between space of infanthood and adulthood. Madelaine Hron describes childhood in contemporary African literature as "a space of hybridity, possibility and, most importantly, resistance" (29). One of the characteristics of this hybrid space is that it is not permanent and can therefore be moulded to present different realities and expectations in the, and of the, postcolonial nation. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi K. Bhabha refers to the hybrid space, the in-between space in cultures, noting:

> the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on exoticism of multiculturalism

> or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the […] *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (38)

Children narrators and protagonists in these prize stories occupy the in-between spaces affording the writer and the reader with the opportunity to negotiate with the ideas of power and domination in the literary and cultural industry. Relying on the marginal space that these narrators and protagonists occupy, the prize stories have managed to engage with the complex relationship not only between the postcolony and the former empire but also within the postcolony itself. The focus on the child protagonist recalls the now popular expression, "children of the postcolony", coined by Djiboutian writer Abdourahman Waberi (1995). Waberi, writing about Francophone African literature, classifies African literature into four historical periods. The last of these periods, beginning from the early 1990s, he classifies as that of the "children of the postcolony" comprising of writers born after the wave of independence. Waberi, who was shortlisted for the 2000 CP, remarks that the main distinguishing characteristics of this group of African writers are their aspiration towards universalism and their acceptance of a double identity.[56] These characteristics are evident in the prize stories as well.

Jackee Budesta Batanda and E.C. Osondu centre on child protagonists in war zones who only think of help from outside their social and geographic set up – from foreign donors and Western adoptive families. Elnathan John in "Bayan Layi", Olumefi Terry in "Stickfighting Days" and Florent Couao-Zotti in "Small Hells on Street Corners" describe the reality of street children in rapidly industrialising towns and cities on the continent. They expose the brutality of street life and the abuse these street children face at the hands of relatives, government officials and even amongst themselves. In John's story, republished in the CP anthology *A Memory This Size* (2013), the reader experiences the exploitation of street children by politicians who use them to gain ascendancy in the political scene. The narrator is one of the street children in the town of Bayan Layi and starts his narration with the haunting line: "The boys who sleep under the Kuka tree in Bayan Layi like to boast about the people they have killed" (78). The politicians also know this fact and have capitalised on the brutalities of the street children, paying the children to cause terror to the community and to intimidate political opponents. During the election season, the boys are paid "to put up

[56] See Abdourahman *Waberi's* essay, "Les Enfants de la postcolonie" ("The Children of the Postcolony"), which originally appeared in Notre Librairie 135 (September–December 1995).

posters for the Small Party and tear off the ones for the Big Party or smash up someone's car in the city" (80). They are also used by the politicians in buying votes and in the end, when the Small Party losses the general election, the boys are contracted to loot and burn and kill. The politicians provide the boys with "machetes, daggers and small gallons of fuel" paying them "two hundred naira each for taking back the votes that were stolen" (88). Couao-Zotti and Terry expose the cruelty of life on the streets, especially for the weaker ones. The protagonist in Couao-Zotti's "Small Hells on Street Corners" is a street child struggling to make his way in the big city alone and as a petty thief. The story ends with the boy's death on the hot asphalt after being hit by a speeding vehicle.

Focusing on child narrators and protagonists requires the narrative to be framed within the family setting. In many of the prize stories the child protagonist is presented as a victim of familial upheavals. The power structure in the production and consumption of literary culture is played out through the family symbol, a constant in several of the prize stories. Discussing the significance of the family trope in postcolonial literature, Ann McClintock in "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family" explains that the family affords the ground for endorsing social hierarchy and the alleged organic unity within it. She also adds that the family unit survives through subordination of one to the other depending on age, gender and other social factors (64). However, the family unit in these prize stories is widely presented as a disintegrating or already broken unit, forcing individuals to stand alone, destroying the supposed unity of the family. In the stories, the destruction of the family unit is blamed on political upheavals, disease and exploitation, among other factors.

One of the most descriptive stories about familial upheavals is presented by Uwem Akpan in "My Parents' Bedroom." The destruction of the family unity is shown to be the result of cultural and political upheavals in the search for a power balance. A once close-knit family comes apart during the Rwandan genocide as Papa is forced to kill his wife and leave his children in the middle of the war. The children in Osondu's story, "Waiting", have been torn away from their families and confined in war camps. Their only way out is to hope for adoption by benevolent western families in Europe and America. Elanthan John in "Bayan Layi" and Olufemi Terry in "Stickfighting Days", among other prize stories, explore the lives of street children to whom familial ties no longer hold and who are left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Commenting on the role of children in postcolonial literature, Sujala Singh in "Postcolonial Children: Representing the Nation in Arundhati Roy, Bapsi Sidwa and Shyam Selvadurai" notes that "the child's point of view becomes a means of commenting on violence legitimized at the level of the nation-state, often through compliant parental or familial silences" (Singh 15). It is this violence that is exposed through the prize-winning stories like "Jungfrau" by Mary Watson, "Jambula Tree" by Monica Arac de Nyeko and "Bayan Layi", among others (as discussed in chapter 4). Appollo Amoko in "Autobiography and *Bildungsroman* in African Literature" explains that "Bildungsroman and autobiography marked the demise of the symbolic authority of the father in the colonial and postcolonial African imagination" and in these prize narratives told from the children's perspective, the absence or the unreliability of parents or older members of the society is notable (207).

Elnathan John's two CP shortlisted stories are about children struggling to make it alone. While the boys in "Bayan Layi" try to find a parental figure in Banda, the oldest of the street children, the children characters in his 2015 CP story, "Flying", find a mother figure in Aunty Keturah, the owner of the children's home in which they are confined. The children in "Flying" all found their way into the home after they were orphaned or abandoned. The children in E.C. Osondu's "Waiting" are orphaned by the war and have therefore learnt to rely on each other in the struggle for food and clothes at the camp. Many of the children characters described in NoViolet Bulawayo's "Hitting Budapest" have been let down by their closest family members, like the case of Paradise who used to run the fastest but cannot do so anymore "because her grandfather made her pregnant" (Bulawayo 9). Sexual exploitation of children is also echoed in "Jungfrau" by Mary Watson and "Tracking the Scent of My Mother" by Muthoni Garland. In the absence of adults, the children learn to stand on their own, often by means of violence, because sometimes this becomes the only way to survive death as is the case of "Stickfighting Days" by Olufemi Terry.

From the trend evident in the prize narratives, some children have learnt to escape from the harsh realities of life by inhabiting the magical and fantastical world that they create as is the case with "Jungfrau", "The Cemetery of Life" and "Flying." Amoko explains that in relatively stable societies, "youth is but the unremarkable and invisible prelude to mature adulthood" (199). However, this perspective changes in societies faced with radical social, political and economic upheavals where the youth are forced to take centre stage. Amoko continues to note that the emergence of this genre in African literature "coincided with a period of radical transformation and social upheaval when, in the wake of colonialism, the

traditional ways of being were seriously undermined, if not forever transformed. Like its European counterpart, the African Bildungsroman focuses on the formation of young protagonists in an uncertain world" (200).

However, in relation to the spirit of Bildungsroman, these children such as Couao-Zotti's, John's or Terry's protagonist are victims who remain "unremarkable and invisible" and never achieve "mature adulthood" (Amoko 19). Christopher Miller in *Theories of Africans* (1990) explains that in the Bildungsroman, or the novel of formation, "[t]he mature narrator, writing from the assurance of adulthood, describes his past as a path out of ignorance and into knowledge" (126). The focus in this literature emphasises growth in the spiritual, moral, psychological or social spheres. Amoko further adds that the "*Bildungsroman* invariably seems to require, in the end, the protagonist's formation (or *Bildung*). The fact of eventual, if not inevitable, *Bildung* becomes anterior to, if not determinative of, the innumerable twists and turns that constitute the rest of the narrative" (Amoko 196). However, an analysis of these prize stories reveals that the child protagonists never achieve maturity. The reliance on this child protagonist who does not show any growth or development throughout the story exposes the complexity of the power relations in the continent's cultural production industry. I argue that this narrative strategy brings to the forefront the power relations that exist between the prize organisation and the writer; between the writer and the publisher; between the former empire and the postcolonial nation; between the privileged writer and the marginal character created.

The 'children of the postcolony' concept in the prize stories also evokes the complex relationship between contemporary African literature and the international prize organisation. The use of the child protagonist who never achieves maturity, I argue, is an attempt to mirror the state of contemporary African literature viewed under the 'benevolent' and 'patronising' eye of the international prize organisation. The stories shortlisted for both the Caine and the Commonwealth prizes demonstrate that by employing the child narrator/protagonist, the writers are engaging with the question of the complex relationship between the African writer and the Western prize organisation; between power and domination in the global literary field. The result has been varied interpretations, ranging from the gratitude of a less fortunate 'receiver' to a mocking of the patronage that usually emerges in such kind of a relationship, as illustrated in the previous chapters. This relationship of power and domination among different fields of literary production echoes Bourdieu's (1993) sentiments where he notes that:

> Those who enter this completely particular social game participate in domination, but as *dominated* agents: they are neither dominant, plain and simple, nor are they dominated (as they want to believe at certain moments of their history). Rather, they occupy a dominated position in the dominant class, they are owners of a dominated form of power at the interior of the sphere of power. This structurally contradictory position is absolutely crucial for understanding the positions taken by writers and artists, notably in the struggles in the social world. (Bourdieu, *The Field* 164)

Bourdieu's observations therefore raise an important question regarding the place of the writer in contrast to the marginal characters in the prize narratives. The position of the award-winning writer is a privileged one, albeit one that is framed within various power domains, including those of the publishing as well as the literary award industry. On the other hand, the writer also possesses the power to represent the marginalised by creating characters who speak as the marginalised. It is also an acknowledgement that,

> In the literary world, domination is not exerted in an unequivocal way. Because hierarchical structure is not linear, it cannot be described in terms of a simple model of a single centralized dominant power. If literary space is relatively autonomous, it is also by the same token relatively dependent on political space. (Casanova 115)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998), discussing marginalisation in the context of imperialism and colonisation, argue that the colonised "are neither all marginalized nor always marginalized" (136). The power relation that exists in the structure of the centre and the margin is not linear; instead it is a continuous process that operates in a complex and multifaceted nature. Spivak (1990) explains that 'Marginality',

> as it is becoming part of the disciplinary-cultural parlance, is in fact the name of a certain constantly changing set of representations that is the condition and effect of it. It is coded in the currency of the equivalences of knowledge. That currency measures the magnitude of value in the sphere of knowledge. (227)

As Joseph Slaughter argues in *Human Rights, Inc.* (2007), the childhood narratives, evident in most of the prize stories, are marketable to a foreign readership because "[t]hese popular stories of literary incorporation package a modicum of tolerable, even cherishable, cultural difference in a generic story form that insinuates a transnational affinity between the novel's reader and its protagonist-reader" (322). Slaughter goes back to the question of production

and consumption of local culture for a foreign audience as an exotic product – as discussed in the previous chapter – by adding the perspective of relying on the coming of age narratives to emphasise cultural difference.

Focusing on children as representatives of marginal cultures therefore serves more purposes than the creation of the exotic in contemporary African literature for, as Huggan argues, the "embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes" (20-21). These marginal characters become important in raising questions about negotiating the relationship between the past, present and future. Marginality in this case, therefore, serves to present these texts' symbolic power. Morton (2010) further explains:

> Marginality is one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class, gender or religion that postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims of dominant European imperial culture. (162)

Morton's argument therefore echoes that of other critics of postcolonial studies within the frame of marginality, like Brouillette and Huggan, who posit that writing about and from the literary and cultural margins is a form of strategy. However, occupying these marginal spaces does not necessarily replace the exotic tag from the contemporary literature. As Huggan is quick to note, writers who inhabit the margins in an effort to undo the power relations in the production of literary culture are subject to market forces which commodify differences as strangeness (11). The next section will therefore focus on further strategies employed in prize stories as a de-exoticisation strategy. This aligns with Brouillette's call for a holistic interpretation of postcolonial literature noting that it is "more fruitful to understand strategic exoticism, and likewise general postcolonial authorial self-consciousness, as comprised of a set of literary strategies that operate through assumptions shared between the author and the reader, as both producer and consumer work to negotiate with, if not absolve themselves of, postcoloniality's touristic guilt" (7).

The contemporary short story and African storytelling tradition

The short story genre has recently achieved a major boost in the international literary circle especially after the awarding of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature to short story writer, Alice Munro. Munro had previously won the 2009 Man Booker International Prize. The same year that the Nobel was awarded to a short story writer also saw the Man Booker International Prize go to another short story writer, Lydia Davis, for her work in 'extremely short stories' and this event has served to reinforce not only the popularity of the genre but also its significance in literary production both locally and globally. Compared with other genres of literature such as the novel, the short story functions in different ways and usually requires the writer to ensure harmony between the story and its form. As one of the long-serving CP judges notes, "the genre works mainly through suggestion" prompting the reader to "seek out the wider insights into a story's presentation" (Wilson-Tagoe 59). In this sense, therefore, the form of the short story as well as the style employed by the writer, play a significant role in determining the overall reception of the work.

The focus on orality as a literary style has been prominent in many of the prize stories and especially common in the earlier Commonwealth short stories. This emphasis, however, must be understood within the context of the initial requirements of the CWSSP prize, which targeted a live audience. The competition was for radio stories which were widely broadcast by BBC radio. In addition, the CP website states clearly that its focus is "on the short story, reflecting the contemporary development of the African storytelling tradition" (Caine Prize, "about", n.p). Former CP judge, Wilson-Tagoe, has also monumentalised this focus on orality in her article on *Wasafiri* where she claims that the short story is "an art form that has links with age-old traditions of storytelling in Africa" (59).

Several critics have erroneously sought to identify a link between African oral tradition and the modern short story genre in a quest for authenticity and continuity in African literature.[57] In fact, as Brouillette explains, "those intellectuals who ingenuously refer to an authentic 'folk' culture are in this way aligned with tourism and the state: each group invests in the idea of 'the people' because it is economically or politically expedient" (28). Investing in an 'authentic' literary style, therefore, serves to parade the literary text in a literary tourism industry that cashes in on the exotic. Adélékè Adéèkó (2007) explains the reasons for the deliberate search for the 'authentic' through the invocation of orality in African literature.

[57] See for example: Eileen Julien's *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992), 3-25.

Writing in "My Signifier is More Native than Yours", he argues that in the search for authenticity, "[a]dvocates of deliberately nativised material instruments of knowing propose that any genuinely *African* cultural practice must seek organic origins in the pre-colonial, oral and folk forms" (234).

Former CP winner Helon Habila terms such deliberate attempts to tie the contemporary African short story to the African tradition of oral storytelling reductionist. In his introduction to *The Granta Book of the African Short Story* (2011), Habila argues against linking the contemporary African short story to oral traditions on the continent, and the folk tale in particular. He warns that "we must never confuse the African short story with the folk tale. A folk tale is episodic; it uses *deus ex machina* to extricate characters from tricky situations; it is didactic; and it mostly uses faeries and animal characters" (xii). The definition of CP stories as being an extension of the African storytelling tradition, I argue, is an attempt by this institution of canon formation to create and market the contemporary African short story as an exotic commodity. Eileen Julien, in *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992), explains that "the oral traditions of Africans are vigorous aesthetic and social acts, but there is nothing more essentially African about orality nor more essentially oral about Africans" (24). This argument is furthered by Nigerian critic Ato Quayson in *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing* (1997), where he notes that the search for this 'authenticity' has sometimes led to "a pedantic urge to differentiate what can be considered African literature from what cannot" (2). The continued awarding of stories that seem to be deliberately trying to create a link between the contemporary short story and the 'African oral tradition' invokes Quayson's sentiments regarding the reliance on orality as a qualifier for 'authentic' African literature. He warns that:

> These tendencies have had significant implications for the terms that govern the criticism of African literature. Not only has an assumption of organicist relationships between traditional resources and African literature been sustained, but a notion of literature being either a receptacle or mirror of culture has also been dominant. (2)

This perspective, therefore, has led to a reading of contemporary stories, both within and beyond the prize, not only as a representation of its cultural contexts but also within the frame of orality as an affirmation of authenticity. My objective in this study is not to read the prize stories as a continuation of the oral story-telling tradition but to analyse how the writers have used oral styles creatively in order to place the works strategically within the different

institutions of canon formation, echoing Spivak's argument in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993) that "[w]hen cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre" (61). The prize narratives, therefore, cannot be entirely classified as oral narratives, despite the fact that some of the stories were written for an audio audience or with a goal of reflecting the "contemporary development of the African storytelling tradition" (Caine Prize, "about", n.p). Julien comments that the "artists in question are creatures of culture, their traditions are in them and inform their works" (25). In this regard, therefore, I attempt a reading of the traces of orality that continue to be evident in several of the shortlisted and winning stories from both the CP and the CWSSP.

Using Quayson's definition in "Magical Realism and the African Novel", orality in this context "transcends the past-orientated sense of 'oral traditions' to embrace a notion of generalized concepts, symbols, rhetorical capacities, and even unarticulated assumptions whose inspiration is the totality of oral culture"(159). Such symbols include myths, proverbs and sayings as well as experimentations with magic realism, as will be highlighted later in this chapter. In line with the oral tradition, the writer "principally employs the style of a story-teller who regards his role as being that of a performer with a moral to teach, and a lesson to impart" (Ogede 73). The teaching moral which is one of the major characteristic of oral narratives is echoed, for instance, by Malawian writer, Stanley Onjezani Kenani, in his two stories previously shortlisted for the CP. "For Honour" was shortlisted in 2008 and is the story of a couple who are unable to conceive because the man is infertile. In their desperate attempt to become parents, they decide to seek the traditional cultural wisdom that allows the wife to engage in sex with another man, the *fisi,* for the sake of conceiving a child. However, as the story reveals, contrary to the earlier agreement between the couple that the wife would only engage in sexual activity with the *fisi* once, the attempt at having children leads to a love affair between the wife and the *fisi*. Through the story, Kenani manages not only to teach about sexual morality in marriage, but also goes further to describe the consequences of immorality and the blind following of 'archaic traditions' by punishing the couple with not only an unstable marriage but also with HIV/AIDS infection and death. The first-person narrator, representing the wronged husband, states: "I failed to understand […] why pre-colonial beliefs and values should still preoccupy our minds at this point in time" (Kenani, "For Honour" 188). In this sense, Kenani through authorial intrusion and orality offers 'moral' guidance on societal values. As Ode S. Ogede observes in "Oral Echoes in Armah's

Short Stories", "[t]he sense of having a mission to teach and to analyse issues of public concern is one of the features that, in general, the modern African writer has borrowed from the oral tradition" (73).

Kenani's "Love on Trial", a story about homophobia, was shortlisted for the 2012 CP – the same year that the overall winning story in the CWSSP, "Two Girls in a Boat", by Emma Martin from the Pacific Region, focused on homoeroticism. Kenani's protagonist is a young man in love who faces arrest and incarceration in a country that has passed an oppressive law against homosexuality. The tale of how one villager was 'caught' in a compromising situation in a public toilet with another man spreads all through the village and the country. Many people including journalists and other curious onlookers troop to the village to hear the account. Kachingwe, the village drunk, is the one who witnesses the toilet scene and he owns the story. He demands alcohol in exchange of the tale that seems to gain a life of its own in every narration. As the writer describes: "In principle his story is for free, whether he is sober or drunk, but in practice if you want to get down to the finest details, 'the juiciest parts' as he calls them, you have to buy him a tot of *kachasu*, the spirit distilled at Mr Nashoni's Village Entertainment Centre on the outskirts of Chipiri village" (Kenani, "Love on Trial" 49). The story is told and retold by the old man, Kachingwe, in the village bar where listeners come from near and far to listen to the details. In this short story originally published in South Africa by eKhaya, Kenani incorporates the style of oral narration complete with a stage (the bar), audience and a token of appreciation to the story teller, which in this case is given in the form of free alcohol. However, by the story's heavy reliance on oral story telling traditions, the narrative becomes didactic and seems to offer a simplified solution to questions of 'morality' in an African context.

In what can be described as an attempt at echoing the didactic nature of the oral tradition, several other narratives have also widely focused on teaching about sexuality, HIV/AIDS and a return to cultural roots. These narratives are mainly told through exaggeration, repetition and the fabular mode, all of which are major technical devices of the oral tale. "Mother Mine" by Maria Ajima was shortlisted for the 2000-2001 CWSSP and uses dialogue as a style that imitates a play-act between a mother and daughter. The mother encourages her daughter to seek sexual favours from a 'family' friend for material benefits. As the narrative shows of the dialogue between mother and daughter:

> Do you notice how oga Kojo keeps staring at you? He is a family friend. He wants to help you.
>
> Me? I am surprised. Whatever for?
>
> Daughter mine, he is in powerful circles.
>
> Mother mine, he stays in Niari.
>
> Daughter mine, the better. He will find a job for you in Niari, the city of gold […]
>
> Mother mine Mr Kojo is faithful to his promises. He has found me a good job in a good company, with good friends. They pass me from hand to hand. (Ajima, n.p)

In the end, the daughter is infected with HIV/AIDS and the story ends with the girl talking about her imminent death. The same theme of sexual morality colours Lauri Kubuitsile's 2006-2007 Commonwealth nominated story, "The Test." The narrative starts with the main protagonist, Rena, testing positive for HIV/AIDS and ends with the death of her boyfriend. Fay Mackllican, shortlisted for the CWSSP in 2000-2001 for "The Homecoming", also narrates the pain and destruction caused by HIV/AIDS. Mackllican's story, set in Zimbabwe, is narrated by a child awaiting her father's return from the gold mines of South Africa. He has been gone for three years but the man the child sees getting off the bus is too old and sick to be her father. As the narrator describes the arrival,

> The bus has stopped. Where is my father? The only person to get off is an old man bent over and hardly able to walk. That cannot be my father. Even though he has been away for three years he cannot be that old. He shuffles, slowly towards me. Coughing and clutching his stomach […] It is my father. (Mackillican, n.p)

The mine worker has returned home to die of HIV/AIDS. These stories not only teach about the overwhelming effects of the virus but also touch on morality and societal values. The same moral issues are echoed in "Chikwanha's Haunting Eyes" by Alexander Kanengoni, shortlisted for the CWSSP in 2001-2002. Kanengoni's story combines poverty, collapse of the economy and HIV/AIDS in an attempt to offer the instructions that oral tales present to society.

Beyond the moralising element of the oral traditions reflected in the prize stories, there is also a focus on other aspects of orality, like myths and experimentation with magic realism. Ben

Okri, who has been described in several academic and media forums as a 'magic realist', has continuously rejected the categorisation, arguing against labels that present a writer in only one dimension.[58] Jean Franco, for instance, in "What's Left of the Intelligentsia?" dismisses magical realism as a "little more than a brand name for exoticism" (204). Franco's dismissal of the genre aligns with Okri's uneasiness with a label that compartmentalises narratives that touch on everyday experiences with the spiritual world or those that are located in epistemologies that are unfamiliar to Western readers, categorising them as 'exotic'. My point in this section, however, is to analyse how prize narratives written in the style of magical realism consciously occupy the exotic codes associated with this style in order to present different realities of the postcolonial state. Christopher Warnes (2009) writes that magical realism is "a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence. On the level of the text neither has a greater claim to truth of referentiality" (3). The use of this style, I propose, aims to level all power hierarchies in literary production.

Okri's short story, "Incidents at the Shrine", included in the anthology to mark ten years of the Caine Prize, elegantly weaves the style of magic realism in a tale about a man who is forced by spirits to go back home from the city to his village. Anderson, the protagonist, has just been sacked from his job in the city where he worked as a messenger in a museum. But even before losing his job he had always struggled to survive. The poverty is not only characteristic of the city but the village as well. In the village he is welcomed into the shrine and the spirit world, which helps to solve his problems before he is sent back to the city with the assurance: "You are going back to the city tomorrow. Go to your place of work, collect the money they are owing you, and look for another job. You will have no trouble" (37). In the story the problems of the contemporary world find solutions in the spirit and magical world.

"Cemetery of Life" by Uzor Maxim Uzoatu was shortlisted for the CP in 2008. The story, narrated through the voice of a dead child, blurs the line between the real and the unreal. The story easily weaves together the lives of the living and the dead, the ancestors and the ghosts. The dead boy narrator and his living "doppelgänger" are involved in a boxing tourney (219). They all interact, oblivious of the boundary between life and death. Using the style of magic realism, Uzoatu comments on the state of Nigeria as voiced through a dead old man who tells

[58] See for example, Ben Okri's interview in the Dutch Neswspaper, *Mondiaal Nieuws*, available online at: http://www.mo.be/en/article/interview-booker-prize-laureate-ben-okri

the narrator that, "[l]ike all Nigerians you are a child who died old" (219). In the social and economic environments in which the story is set, corruption is rife and everybody is trying to survive in a harsh economic period. This fantasy style is also evident in Anthony C. Diala's 2005-2006 CWSSP shortlisted story, "The Strange Child." Diala's is a tale of a woman who falls in love with, and marries a man without knowing his roots. When he eventually agrees to lead her to his village, the woman finds out that the man she calls husband is a ghost. His family informs her that he had been dead for a long time. Diala's narrative therefore can be read from the template of the folk motif of the girl who refuses to marry all the suitable suitors, only to end up marrying a giant or a ghost. In this sense, therefore, by relying on the oral tradition, the narrative insists on teaching the importance of cultivating family and cultural roots.

Writing about magic realism in the context of the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez as a third world writer, Spivak (1993) argues that "this formal conduct of magical realism can be said to allegorize, in the strictest possible sense, a socius and a political configuration where 'decolonisation' cannot be narrativized" (223). For instance, the realities that cannot be narrativised such as war, disease and death, find a narrative frame through the style of magic realism. The quest to inhabit the marginal spaces here is expressed by the writer who oscillates constantly between the real and the magical in the context of orality. Magic realism in the prize-winning stories therefore becomes a hybrid that is then "proffered as that mode of representation that challenges the Western tradition of realism, positing instead an alternative universe in which fantastical elements are placed side by side with the real in a process of establishing equivalence between them" (Quayson, "Magical Realism", 160). By relying on this process, the prize stories contribute towards destroying the binary structures of real and unreal, centre and margin, power and domination, in the global literary field. As Fredric Jameson writes in "On Magic Realism in Film", this style acts as "a possible alternative to the narrative logic of contemporary postmodernism" (302). I therefore argue that although magic realism can function as a form of exoticisation in the prize narratives, it has its subversive uses as shown by the writers who rely upon the genre to deconstruct power hierarchies within the cultural and literary field.

In his analysis of Ayi Kwei Armah's short stories, Ogede further adds that one of the other methods by which writers emulate an oral text includes the attempt to capture the semblance of a direct communication with the audience. This is achieved mainly through the choice of the narrative voice. As Ogede notes, the "direct address is thus the main vehicle in the

author's experimentation with the mode of invented dialogue" (74). This is usually reflected through the deliberate employment of the first-person's point of view in many of the prize stories. In most of these cases, the stories are narrated by wise old people, victims of social and political injustices, innocent children and marginal characters in a strategy that aims at a moralising agenda. Therefore, although many of the short stories for the CP and the CWSSP cannot be classified as folk tales, the influence of the African oral narrative forms and devices is evident. I argue that the reliance on orality is a deliberate creation of writers to inhabit the spaces that have been categorised as marginal and exotic. Quayson (1997) examines the centrality of oral traditions in the works of Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri and concludes that:

> A recognition of this [orality in the written texts] is not […] to postulate African literary texts as mere mirrors or receptacles of culture. Rather, it is to recognise that every work of art has a cultural dimension which discursively interacts with other aspects of the literary text to locate it in a particular field of relevance instead of another. (158)

By inhabiting the marginal space suggested by the definition of orality in their prize stories, the writers are participating in a process of breaking the hierarchy of domination in literary production. Through the embrace of orality as a literary style, these award winning narratives succeed in breaking the purported linear progression of African literature from oral to written. They present orality not in isolation or in opposition to writing but as an aesthetic value to contemporary literature.

Towards de-exoticisation

In their book, *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* (1998), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin expound on the idea of centre versus margin and the creation of the position of the marginalised Other. They argue, correctly, that the idea of the centre and the margin arose to justify colonial oppression by presenting a binary opposition between the colonising and the colonised cultures. When contemporary postcolonial writers therefore strive to inhabit and own the places that have previously been termed as marginal, they are consciously involved in dismantling such binaries. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain that

> dismantling such binaries does more than merely assert the independence of the marginal, it also radically undermines the very idea of such a centre, deconstructing

> the claims of the European colonizers to a unity and a fixity of a different order from that of others. In this sense the dismantling of centre/margin (periphery) models of culture calls into question the claims of any culture to possess a fixed, pure and homogenous body of values, and exposes them all as historically constructed, and thus corrigible formations. (37)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) warn that the focus on marginality should not aim to reverse the power relations but to deconstruct the centre-margin hierarchy. In resistance to being categorised as marginal, the marginalised should not aim at the accumulation of power that centrality entails because "resistance can become a process of replacing the centre rather than deconstructing the binary structure of centre and margin" (135). In this sense therefore, the performance of marginality as presented through prize narratives should aim at a balance, instead of an inversion of power in the literary field. As discussed in the previous chapter, the 'exotic' in a literary work is not an inherent quality but instead is a value imposed on a work in order to appeal to a certain audience. Following this argument, therefore, I conclude that just as the 'exotic' is a conscious creation, it is also possible to engage in a conscious effort towards the shedding of the exotic qualities from the cultural and literary text – a process I refer to as de-exoticisation.

In her analysis of strategic exoticism in postcolonial literature, Brouillette relies heavily on the works of Derek Walcott who, she argues, has "often deployed the techniques of strategic exoticism" by being self-conscious about his authorial position (26). Analysing Walcott's work, she concludes that he has managed to frame his work outside the exotic codes, despite being a postcolonial writer, by inhabiting the marginal spaces.[59] Brouillette notes of Walcott that:

> Thematically his work expresses significant ambiguity about politics, about colonialism and its aftermath, and about the culture native to his region. Such ambiguity, associable with a vaguely anti-imperialist and anti-colonial but resolutely 'complex' political liberalism, has been recognized as one of the major legitimizing features that sanction literary success for postcolonial writers in the current marketplace. Walcott's work is critically appreciated, one could argue, precisely because it is 'neither complicitous nor adversarial. (39)

[59] Also See *Derek Walcott* (1999) by John Thieme.

As a postcolonial writer, therefore, Walcott has avoided being viewed as a representative of the culture from which he comes. He has also avoided the exotic tag in his work by embracing ambiguity in relation to political themes. In this way he succeeds, at some level, in achieving de-exoticisation in his work. This strategy has also been echoed by African prize-winning writers like Brian Chikwava, Lauri Kubuitsile, Tope Folarin, Okwiri Oduor, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, among others, whose work demonstrate a deliberate ambiguity about the politics of the day while at the same time commenting on the current state of the postcolonial nation. Discussing Abdulrazak Gurnah as a postcolonial writer who is aware of his marginal status, Sally-Ann Murray notes that he has also "intentionally tried to occupy awkward, liminal positions as a writer, becoming self-consciously estranging in order to break fossilized assumptions about identity" (152). She adds that Gurnah's strategy in the postcolonial literary market has been to occupy the gaps, articulate contradictions and create disjuncture through his work in order to "create a form of diasporic pluralisms that exposes the fiction of singularity and separateness" (152).[60]

As discussed in the previous chapter, many of the prize-winning stories are obsessed with the portrayal of the gory, the violent and the painful in the process of creating an "aesthetic of suffering" (Brouillette 37). The narratives about the Rwandan genocide, about the LRA war in Northern Uganda, about exploitation of mine workers in South Africa and the devastation of famine and disease prevalent in the prize stories are not necessarily false or an invention of the machinery of literary production. But while some of these stories only contribute to the continued stereotyping of the continent as a place of war, disease and starvation, other stories have managed to engage with these same issues without necessarily engaging in the aesthetics of suffering. Through their prize-winning short stories, a number of contemporary postcolonial writers have revealed pockets of subversion through ambiguity in their narratives. This ambiguity is mainly evident through the narration of ordinary everyday events where the characters are not presented as victims of their circumstances but instead as agents in their own political, social and economic contexts. Zimbabwean writer Brian Chikwava in his Caine winning story, "Seventh Street Alchemy", embraces this ambiguity to tell the story of the crisscrossing lives of "Harare's struggling inhabitants" (9). The story, which was first published in 2003 by Weaver Press in Harare, is narrated under the shadow of the post 2000 economic crisis in Zimbabwe without the writer necessarily pointing it out. Chikwava manages to expose the effects of the economic meltdown on ordinary people

[60] See also Arjun Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography" (346).

without necessarily fetishising the poverty faced by Stix the musician, Anna, whose marriage is breaking apart, and Fiso, the ageing prostitute together with her daughter, Sue. In this way, the narrative focuses more on character development to leave the reader contemplating not the inhuman conditions experienced, but the morality of political leadership in a country which has dehumanized the people to a point of nonexistence. For instance, Fiso can neither get a birth nor a death certificate and therefore, legally, she does not exist. That is why she cannot be judged in a court of law because that would mean acknowledging her existence. Chikwava, in "Seventh Street Alchemy", acts as a guide to the reader through the lives of the inhabitants of this city, presenting the irony of their existence.

Numerous South African prize narratives have also ambiguously engaged with the history of apartheid in the country and its manifestations in the contemporary society. Some of these narratives seem to make a conscious effort at avoiding commentaries on the political status of their setting. The winning and shortlisted stories range from family and love relationships, to bar brawls, crime and insecurity to a creative imagination of a post-apocalypse state as in the case of Henrietta Rose-Innes' "Poison." Rose-Innes's short story won the 2008 CP and it describes Cape Town in a state of ruin following a chemical explosion; everyone is fleeing because the "oily cloud" looms above them, "boil[ing] up taller and taller into the sky, a plume twice as high as the [Table] mountain, leaning towards them like an evil genie" (181). This is a depiction of a post-apartheid and post-racial society where the people have to unite in order to escape the oncoming polluted cloud which is a metaphorical representation of the political past. On the other hand, "Life of Worm" by Ken Barris and "A Joburg Story" by Darrel Bristow-Bovey explore crime and insecurity through characters presented as paranoid about crime and corruption in post-apartheid South Africa. The first-person narrator in "Life of Worm" is obsessed with ensuring his safety by owning a fierce dog and having electric fences, gates and alarm systems installed all over his property. He is always looking over his shoulder, imagining someone to be after him or his possessions. In the same vein, Bristow-Bovey's tale also focuses on a group of men enjoying a drink at a bar when a stranger 'warns' them that he has been hired to kill them but that he would let them go if they bribed him. The men are torn between believing the stranger and dismissing it as a case of blackmail without any basis. In both stories, individual security is presented as an important aspect in the contemporary society, and especially an obsession of the middle class, demonstrating how the political ills of the past manifest in the present.

Writing about the South African cultural production industry, Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael in *Senses of Culture* (2000) observe that cultural theorisation in the region has mainly been based on "the over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the fixation on race, or more particularly on racial supremacy and racial victimhood as a determinant of identity" adding that by the adoption of these paradigms, the country has "projected itself as different, as special and as unique" (1-2). Nuttall and Michael therefore call for the deconstruction of these assumptions, urging for more investments in new forms of literary and cultural imaginings. Notable is the fact that South African writers have dominated in the prize stories about ordinary, everyday experiences that consciously evade exploring the influence of politics on the lives of ordinary people in postcolonial states. Some of these stories include Alistair Morgan's "Icebergs" which is about a father's attempt to emotionally reconnect with his daughter after the death of his wife, and Constance Myburgh's "Hunter Emmanuel", a crime tale about a journalist who ends up a victim. David Medalie's "The Mistress's Dog" and Diane Awerbuck's "Phosphorescence" explore family relationships and individual struggles for happiness. Medalie's story, shortlisted for the CP in 2011, revolves around an elderly woman who has outlived her husband and his mistress and who later forms a strong bond with the mistress's dog which has been left under her care. In "Phosphorescence" a troublesome teenager from Johannesburg goes to spend some time with her grandmother in Cape Town. The teenager, the reader learns, had tried to commit suicide before being sent to spend time with the old woman. The narrative dwells mainly on the two women in a derelict pool set for demolition. In the end, the two women manage to form a bond that reaches beyond the generational difference.

Writing about ordinary everyday experiences is a form of subversion of expectations. Writing about sex, family and love in the midst of historical violence or displacement is a deliberate action towards de-exoticisation. This is significant especially when compared and contrasted to earlier short stories written and produced in apartheid South Africa, which mostly found an outlet through the then popular literary magazine, *Drum*. During the *Drum* decade the writers were more concerned with the state of the nation at the time, presenting the effects of political, economic and social oppression of the marginalised black community in apartheid South Africa. Michael Chapman, in the article "More Than Telling a Story", aptly captures the focus of earlier South African short stories, noting that "Most of the writers were concerned with more than just telling a story. They were concerned with what was happening to their people and, in consequence, with moral and social questions" (183). The significant

change in focus, especially viewed from the prism of post-apartheid South African literature, therefore shatters the notion of the postcolonial writer being preoccupied with writing back to the empire.

"In the Spirit of McPhineas Lata" by Lauri Kubuitsile from Botswana focuses entirely on a group of villagers and their daily struggles. The humorous story, shortlisted for the CP in 2011, revolves around the sexual infatuation of the village women with the man called "McPhineas Lata, the perennial bachelor who made a vocation of troubling married women" (38). When McPhineas Lata dies, the women are devastated because their regular visits with him are over. The men are at first jubilant because McPhineas Lata will no longer be sleeping with their wives. Later, they realise that to please their women the same way that McPhineas Lata used to, they have to either reawaken his ghost or to learn his sexual prowess. In the end, the story seems to be pointing at the need for individuals to look for solutions within themselves instead of relying on external help.

Familial tension is a major theme in other winning stories including Tope Folarin's and Okwiri Oduor's CP pieces. Folarin's story, "Miracle", is set in church against the background of a teenager who is still to come to terms with his mother's leaving, while the narrator in Oduor's "My Father's Head" tries to summon the spirit of a father as a way of mourning him. The search for de-exoticisation in the prize works, and beyond, aims to make a statement that the postcolonial writer is over the colonial neuroses and is ready to point at the victims and perpetrators without necessarily invoking the history of colonial domination.

Helon Habila, in the introduction to the *Granta Book of the African Short Stories* (2011), notes that most of the contemporary African writers are young and concerned with cosmopolitan ideas as compared to earlier generation writers who were mainly committed to national colonial and anticolonial concerns. Habila refers to the contemporary writers as 'postnationalist'. However, even as he acknowledges that the term 'postnationalist' is aspirational, he views this new generation as having "the best potential to liberate itself from the often predictable, almost obligatory obsession of the African writer with the nation and with national politics" (viii). The current preoccupation of the contemporary African artists is an issue that has been raised by other critics like Emma Dawson Varughese, who conducted fieldwork in four different African countries and presents data which suggest a shift from the classic postcolonial text to new, contemporary literature focusing on new departures in theme and genre. Writing in *Beyond the Postcolonial: World Englishes Literature* (2012),

Varughese argues that the new writing from former colonial nations are more focused on ordinary events like family relations, love and tension in the urban centres with no causal links between these events and colonialism or its legacy. Varughese's conclusion is supported by the works of other critics like J. Roger Kurtz in *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears* (1998), Njeri Githire in "New Visions, New Voices: Emerging Perspectives in East African Fiction" and Tom Odhiambo in "Kenyan Popular Fiction in English and the Melodramas of the Underdogs." From these different critics' perspectives, the popular African story is preoccupied with the urban space and ordinary human experiences like love and struggle and the need to fit into new social and economic orders. Contrasting the preoccupation of the contemporary prize stories and popular narratives that are framed outside the international prize institutions illustrates that the award industry does not simply reflect the literary preoccupations of the writer but has also significantly contributed to shaping the literary field.

Conclusion

The prize narratives analysed here reveal a conscious effort at deconstructing the patronage of the international literary award through writing social and political realities of Africa without succumbing to the stereotypical representation of the continent as a place of pain. This chapter has focused on the concepts of strategic exoticism and authorial self-consciousness, as expounded by Huggan and Brouillette respectively, as methods deployed by contemporary writers to fit within the literary market demands and, in the process, gain global visibility. It is concerned with the marginal spaces in literary and cultural production. By relying on the marginal codes such as orality and aesthetics of pain, the stories seek to find a balance between speaking out and silence, between power and domination, between pain as a positive and a negative symbol at the same time. These prize-winning texts have relied on the same symbols that are used to advance the stereotype of Africa as a place of violence, war, disease and death, and converted them to a literary currency against exoticisation.

The chapter has illustrated that the codes of marginalisation and exoticism become powerful tools for creating a counter-narrative in contemporary African literature. The analyses of these prize-winning stories have also pointed at the fallacy of a fixed interpretation of pain and violence in the contemporary African short story. The chapter makes the general argument that African writers, like most writers from previously colonised nations, are often

preoccupied with the writing and rewriting of the socio-historical and political realties through the trope of pain and suffering. It argues that the writers have learnt to inhabit the codes that have previously been labelled as marginal in an effort to deconstruct power hierarchies in the field of literary production and to gain global literary visibility that the award industry provides. It has revealed that contemporary African writers have learnt to work within the limitations of international prize organisations. My argument is that these prize authors are writing about, and within, marginalised categories of representation in an effort to try and subvert these codes of marginalisation as well as to uncover "differential relations of power" in the context of literary and cultural production (Huggan ix-x). The writers understand the political, cultural and economic power imbalances associated with occupying this space in the field of cultural production. They occupy the dominant position when they act as 'authenticated' representatives of the lands they belong to. However, in the shadow of the prize organisation or the publisher, these postcolonial writers revert to the position of the dominated. Access to the global literary market, as shown through the literary analysis of selected prize stories, is determined by how well a writer learns to navigate through these two different fields of power. The prize narratives also demonstrate the various strategies employed by contemporary African writers in the struggle for social and political empowerment. The marginal styles, forms, characters and thematic concerns become powerful devices because they gives voice to the unheard, the unseen, the dominated, in order to question disempowerment and domination not only in the literary production industry but in the cultural, economic and political environment in general. In conclusion, therefore, marginality in most of the postcolonial works represents the symbolic power of these texts.

Building up on the concept of de-exoticisation, the next chapter further examines other efforts put in place by contemporary African writers in the search for visibility at the global literary marketplace. It presents the search for alternative literary cultures in African literary production as the writers struggle against political and economic patronage. In this regard, it investigates the growth of alternative publishing structures, creative writing programs and local award organisations and how they have contributed to the projection of African literature at the international literary award level.

CHAPTER 6

Finding Alternative Literary Cultures

Introduction

As the previous chapters in this dissertation have established, economic dependency in cultural production has resulted in the creation and foregrounding of a literature coloured by patronage. The influence of political, social and economic patronage in contemporary African literature has directly been reflected in the texts presented for international awards which have continued the stereotype of Africa by the primary focus on the aesthetics of suffering. Analysing the process of de-exoticisation in the prize-winning works requires one to not only focus on the prize shortlists but to also investigate the changing mechanisms of African literary production industry that feed into the international literary prize machinery. The Caine Prize (CP) receives submission from publishers and, the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (CWSSP), although it only accepts unpublished works, this study has illustrated that majority of its shortlisted writers are associated with different local African literary associations. It therefore becomes imperative to explore the different ways through which local literary organisations, introduced in the third chapter of this dissertation, contribute towards the de-exoticisation of contemporary literature at the international prize level.

This chapter further engages with the role of the award industry in literary canonisation by examining how the search for de-exoticisation of African literature has resulted with the creation of alternative literary cultures on the continent. The chapter examines how locally based, and funded, literary organisations such as *Kwani*?, *Chimurenga*, *Farafina*, FEMRITE and *Jalada*, among others, have been consciously involved in providing alternative literary structures for contemporary African writers. I argue that these literary outfits are engaged in the creation of counter-cultures by investment in the local publishing and prize industries. The chapter seeks to make evident that this investment is driven by the need to avoid the influence of political and economic patronage at the international literary market. I further explore the contradictions that arise in the search for independence from literary outfits such as international prizes and publishers by demonstrating how, at the end of the literary production chain, the Caine and Commonwealth prizes remain as the major validation agencies for contemporary African writing.

In "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" Raymond Williams contends that "in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective" (135). Williams' Marxist analysis of society stems from the concept of hegemony that permeates all layers of society through the dominant culture. However, he further acknowledges the existent of other "alternative" cultures outside the frame of the dominant culture. These alternative or oppositional cultures are established to deconstruct the influence of the dominant culture. In this chapter, I analyse the international literary award sector as the dominant culture in African literary production and explore ways in which local organisations are participating in the construction of alternative or oppositional cultures.

In search of literary autonomy: independent creative writing programmes

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story "Jumping Monkey Hill" has explored the concept of creative writing workshops in Africa, engaging with the idea of literary patronage and its effects on the text. The story is a fictionalised account of a writer who attends a writing workshop and observes the mechanisms put in place both economically and socially to present the exotic as a marketable quality in African literature. Adichie's short story, initially published in *Granta*, forces the reader to confront the role of the creative writing programme in contemporary literary production.

In the contemporary African literary scene, international organisations such as the CP and the CWSSP are major award institutions whose influence stretches from the pre-writing process to writing, publishing, awarding and the post-award sales. One of the major sources of cultural capital for the Caine and Commonwealth prizes has been the sustained literary links with local writers' organisations and magazines. The prizes' involvement with contemporary writing is not only framed within the lenses of the award industry but it extends to different sectors of cultural production to include publishing partnerships with local organisations as well as joint creative writing programmes for African writers. The African literary organisations not only provide writers with an access to a wider audience through publications, they also take part in the production of this literature by training writers who publish in different journals and magazines. Through such organisations and partnerships, the text circulates within the literary market as a commodity whose value is conferred through the award.

For instance, the Commonwealth Writers Foundation organises regular fiction, creative non-fiction and screenwriting workshops for writers from different parts of the Commonwealth. In Africa, the most prominent of the Commonwealth workshops is the creative non-fiction workshop which was, for the first time, held in Uganda in 2014. The workshop, facilitated by the Chair of judges for the 2014 Commonwealth Prize, Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, was held in partnership with FEMRITE writers' organisation and the participants were drawn mainly from East Africa. The most consistent of these creative writing programmes, however, is the Caine Prize for African Writers' Workshop. It is an annual event established in 2003 and brings together the previous year's long-listed writers at a ten-day event where authors meet to brainstorm and exchange ideas on writing and publishing. Participation in the Caine workshops is by invitation only and the writers are expected to produce short stories which are then published in the annual Caine Prize anthology. These workshops are held in different African countries and usually in partnership with local literary organisations. For instance, the CP workshop in 2013 was held in Uganda in collaboration with FEMRITE and the British Council. The tutors in these workshops are drawn from the university as well as from the wider literary field to include writers, editors, journalists and publishers. The most recurring names include Veronique Tadjo, Jamal Mahjoub and Aminatta Forna who have served as tutors since 2003. The other facilitators include Henrietta Rose-Innes (2012 and 2014); Nii Parkes (2014); Pamela Nichols (2013); Peter Merrington (2003, 2004); Beverly Naidoo (2003); and Binyavanga Wainaina (2005).

The prize institutions have further partnered with Western-based academic institutions to offer creative writing fellowships to winning writers. The CP partners with Georgetown University to offer a writers' residency to the winners each year while Etisalat winners are offered a four month residency at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. *Storymoja* Africa in Kenya, *Farafina* Trust in Nigeria and FEMRITE are perhaps some of the most active of these organisations, holding annual creative writing workshops for up-and-coming writers. For instance, FEMRITE has partnered with other literary journals and organisations in its annual Residency for African Women writers. The ten day residency allows selected writers to work on their continuing projects and interact with other writers within a creative environment. Previously, FEMRITE and *Kwani*? writers have also participated in the Crossing Border Programme of the British Council in a project that facilitated the training of creative writers from different African countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South African and Cameroon. According to the Cross Border Magazine,

the Crossing Border programme "promoted cross-cultural developmental dialogue between emergent African writers working in English and experienced UK-based *mentors*."[61] According to information available at the Crossing Border programme website, the project was funded by "the British Council in London, designed and managed by the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University and enabled by a network of British Council offices in Africa."[62] This project which run from 2001 to 2004, therefore, took part in the production of African literature patronised both cultural and economically from the West. The programme advertised itself as aiming to promote emerging African writers under the mentorship of established UK writers. Strauhs acknowledges that the programme helped to project African writers to international fame for it "broke the isolation of the emerging […] writer in that it provided research, editing, and publishing opportunities" that local organisations could not provide on the same scale (75).

From the African literary perspective, the creative writing programmes are mainly organised jointly by award bodies and writers' organisations. The success of these programmes has been affirmed through the award industry which continues to privilege literature produced through such settings. This success has also prompted the mushrooming of other locally based creative writing programmes modelled on the British award institutions. As mentioned earlier, these 'independent' training programmes are usually conducted by local writers' organisations, led by authors who have previously been canonised by both international and local awards such as the Booker prize, Caine prize, Commonwealth prize, or the Etisalat Prize, PEN awards and the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature, an arrangement that reflects a conscious effort to lend the cultural capital accumulated from the award bodies for the development of literary culture on the continent. The literature produced at such settings is later submitted for international literary prize competitions, thereby confirming the influential role of production structures in canon formation.

In West Africa, *Farafina* Trust is a Nigerian literary organisation that is funded locally by Nigerian Brewery. Part of the original goal of establishing this organisation included the publication of a literary magazine. However, the print magazine only ran from 2005 to 2009 and its failure is explained in the organisation's website as having been caused by "the financial unsustainability of the magazine, exacerbated by the prevailing economic climate" (Farafina Trust, "About Us", n.p). Despite the financial hitch, Farafina Trust's most

[61] Online. Available at: http://transculturalwriting.com/radiophonics/contents/about/index.html
[62] Online. Available at: http://transculturalwriting.com/radiophonics/contents/about/index.html

prominent output is the annual creative writing workshop which continues to attract new and upcoming writers from all over the continent each year. The annual *Farafina* workshop is usually facilitated by Binyavanga Wainaina and Chimamanda Adichie. The latter also serves as the creative director of the Trust. The *Farafina* participants are selected from a large number of entries from all over Africa. Through the sponsorship from Nigerian Breweries Plc., the organisation is able to waiver the participation fees and to provide accommodation for participants during the workshop. Although *Farafina* does not provide an opportunity for the publication of the literary works produced in these settings, many of the workshop's alumni have later been the recipients of major literary awards, for example Elnathan John who was shortlisted for the Caine in 2013 and 2015, and Uche Okonkwo who won the inaugural edition of the Etisalat Prize for Flash Fiction. Despite its economic and political independence, *Farafina* has however continued to rely on the symbolic value associated with international literary prizes like the Orange, the Commonwealth and the Caine prizes which have canonized Adichie and Wainaina – the main tutors in the yearly workshops.

In Kenya, the *Storymoja* writers' workshops are usually held during the annual Hay Festival, which is a literary event that brings to Nairobi different acclaimed writers and literary enthusiasts from all over the world. The *Storymoja* writers' organisation operates as a "Literary Non-Governmental Organisation (LINGO)" with funding from different organisations (Strauhs 2013:22).[63] For instance, in 2015 *Storymoja* hosted the annual Hay Festival with funds from various organisations such as the British Council, Caine Prize, Miles Morland Foundation, HIVOS and Book Aid International.[64] *Storymoja* also offers other creative writers' workshops throughout the year, categorised by genres and themes to cater to the needs of different writers and readers. The description on the organisation's website reads:

> We train aspiring writers to improve their craft skills and to develop books and stories. Most of our children's books emanate from these workshops. We train in both corporate and in-house settings. A recently completed six-month workshop involved training eight university students to write contemporary stories now being used in a graphic version to train teenagers on conflict resolution and peace building online. (Storymoja Africa, "about", n.p)

[63] Doreen Strauhs (2013) defines LINGO as "a nongovernmental organization with a focus on the production and promotion of literary talent, events, and publications that is situated in the nonprofit sector" (22).
[64] See: http://storymojafestival.com/partners-2/

These creative writing workshops are led by *Storymoja*'s founding member, Muthoni Garland, longlisted and shortlisted for the Caine in 2005 and 2006 respectively. As opposed to other creative writing workshops such as *Farafina,* CP or FEMRITE workshops, participation in the *Storymoja* writing workshops requires a participation fee. For example, a call for participants to a *Storymoja* Writing for Children Workshop in 2009 put the cost at Ksh12,000 ($135) for a two month course.[65] In 2015, a two and a half hours' *Storymoja* poetry workshop facilitated by Keguro Macharia was charged at Ksh3,000 ($35).[66] The price tag associated with these writers' workshops in terms of participation fee and travel expenses (for *Farafina* participants) therefore create an elitist literary archive facilitated by these literary networks which is then projected through the international prize organisation.

One of the newest literary organisations on the continent that is mainly preoccupied with the process of creative writing is creatively named "*Writivism"* in a play of words that merges writing with activism. *Writivism* is a project of the Centre for African Cultural Excellence based in Kampala, Uganda. According to this organisation's website, the main funding partners for *Writivism* are: Miles Morland Foundation, Danish Centre for Culture and Development, Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research and the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development.[67] The composition of its board members reveals that the writers' collective has benefited immensely from past and present associations with major award bodies. Board members include the Caine Prize Director Lizzy Attree, Nii Ayikweyi Parkes (who was a judge in the 2012 CWSSP), E.C. Osondu (2009 CP winner) and Noviolet Bulawayo (2011 CP winner and 2013 Booker shortlistee). The *Writivism* initiative was launched in 2013 and its activities include writing workshops held in different African cities throughout the year, a short story prize competition and publishing opportunities for selected writers. The inaugural *Writivism* prize was chaired by South African writer, Zukiswa Wanner whose third book, *Men of the South* (2011), was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Book Prize in 2011. *Writivism* 2014 chair of judges, Ellen Banda-Aaku was the winner of the 2007 CWSSP with her story, "Zosi's Box." The *Writivism* workshop is structured in such a way that the training is not entirely managed by the facilitators. The emerging writers are paired with, and expected to learn from, published and better known writers like Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Chibundo

[65] See the 2009 Storymoja workshop requirements at: https://storymojaafrica.wordpress.com/2009/02/11/a-storymoja-writing-for-children-workshop/
[66] See the 2015 Storymoja workshop requirements at http://blog.storymojafestival.com/poetry-of-place-a-workshop-with-keguro-macharia-phd/
[67] Online. Available <http://writivism.com/

Onuzo, Chinelo Okparanta, Clifton Gachagua, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, Karen Jennings, Lauri Kubuitsile, Meg Vandermerwe, Mehul Gohil, Okwiri Oduor, Rotimi Babatunde, Tope Folarin and Uzor Maxim Uzoatu among others, most of whom have been canonised by awards such as the Caine, the Commonwealth, and the Booker. The affiliations of the writers directly involved in the creative writing programmes underscores interlinkages of the exchange between different production mechanisms in the process of canon formation.

Despite the emerging complex relationship between local institutions of literary production and the international literary prize industry, Strauhs attempts to distance the institutional link, arguing that "it is through personal connections and individual decisions, yet not through the LINGOs' agendas, that LINGO associates *nurture* with prizes and writing program initiatives" (76, my emphasis). However, as the discussion of the above reveals, both the prize and the local literary organisations are involved in a kind of exchange of symbolic value within the field of cultural production. The writers canonized by the international prize organisations have been sourced from these local literary organisations. In turn, these writers have used the economic and symbolic power achieved from the literary prizes to support local literary magazines and journals through writing and publications as well as through creative writing workshops.

MFA vs writing workshops

The rise of the creative writing workshops on the African continent comes even as Swedish Academy member, Horace Engdahl, offered blistering remarks on the role played by creative writers' trainings in the Western world. In an interview with French paper *La Croix* shortly before the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature winner was announced, Engdahl not only downplayed the role of creative writing courses but also claimed that the courses were responsible for the decreasing quality of literature in the Western world.[68] Noting that the "professionalisation" of literature was having a negative effect on the literary products, Engdahl was of the opinion that financial support and creative writing programmes were cutting writers off from society, creating an unhealthy relationship between writers and academic institutions. Engdahl's comments were, however, only targeted at the Western world and its academic institutions, since Engdahl views literature from Africa and Asia as

[68] The French paper report as quoted by *The Guardian* online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/07/creative-writing-killing-western-literature-nobel-judge-horace-engdahl

'untainted' by the creative writing programmes. He adds in the interview with Sabine Audrerie that it is on "our western side that there is a problem, because when reading many writers from Asia and Africa, one finds a certain liberty again […] I hope the literary riches which we are seeing arise in Asia and Africa will not be lessened by the assimilation and the westernisation of these authors." According to this Swedish Academy member, therefore, creative writing programmes or MFAs are a creation of Western institutions and are basically located in or provided by academic institutions only. In fact, as Mark McGurl explains in *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (2009), the production of American literary culture and fiction in the US is closely intertwined with academic institutions as particularly reflected through the ever growing creative writing programmes.

However, as demonstrated by the discussion of the position of creative writing programmes on the African continent, this training is mainly an initiative of writers' organisations, with the facilitators and tutors mainly being outsourced from outside the university circle. Detaching the creative writing courses from the university setting, therefore, challenges the role of the academy as the only consecrating institution in regard to literary production. It is also an affirmation of the fact that local literary organisations and magazines have finally gained the cultural economy needed to train, produce and consecrate literary value.

In "Creative Writing: The Ghost, the University and the Future", Graeme Harper examines the interlinkages between the creative writing process and the university in the global north and poses the question: "Why […] are we frequently still operating in universities, as if creative writing is aligned so closely with a centralised economic system of exchange […]?" (12). The answer to this question is aptly captured in Jeff Sparrow's (2012) analysis of the function of the academy in Western literary production. Sparrow, in "Creative Writing, Neo-Liberal and the Literary Paradigm", notes that

> [c]ertainly, academic creative writing offers aspiring authors discipline and structure, mentors and peers, all of which may prove difficult to find elsewhere. While many students go into debt for their studies, the study of writing may, through scholarships and bursaries, provide an income for some. Most of all, because of its links with industry, academic enrolment enables would-be authors to overcome the awful catch-22 facing emerging writers, who cannot attract a publisher without an agent and cannot attract an agent without prior publication. For that reason, formal study will, in

> all likelihood, become (if it has not already) the most common path to publication for new writers. (92)

While Sparrow's and Harper's analyses are based on the Western academy and its creative writers, I want to argue that the same framework applies for the African literary organisation and its creative writers. In Africa, MFA in creative writing is a course available only in selected universities, most of which are based in South Africa. This has resulted in a market gap that has been quickly filled by writers' organisations such as *Storymoja*, *Farafina*, *Writivism, Kwani*? and FEMRITE. This is because the local literary organisation possesses the cultural capital necessary to link writers to prize organisations and publishers, and therefore to global visibility. Among the prize winning writers in this research, only a handful have had experiences with MFA programmes before winning literary awards. Jennifer Makumbi Nansubuga, who won the CWSSP and the *Kwani*? Manuscript prize, is one of such writers who have entered the African literary prize industry from the academia. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from Lancaster University and it is her doctoral novel, *The Kintu Saga*, which won the *Kwani*? Manuscript prize. In general, many African writers, especially those based on the continent, have relied heavily on the informal trainings provided by local literary outfits because the organisations such as *Writivism*, FEMRITE, *Kwani*? and *Farafina* are able to provide for the African writer what the university provides for the Western writer.

Indeed, in the introduction to *The Creativity Market* (2012), Dominique Hecq notes that the creative industry is built on cultural myths and that writers will aim to get affiliated with institutions that are guaranteed to propel them to the literary market. Hecq notes that

> cultural myths about creativity are sensitive issues, as these impact on the way creative practitioners define themselves and go about their business. This may even be more of a sensitive issue for creative writers who pursue postgraduate studies in universities, as they have often already established a professional reputation and demonstrated their talent; they now have to prove their commercial potential on top of their academic excellence. (3)

The choice between informal and formal training for creative writers therefore seem to lean more on market links that each institution is able to provide for the writer both in the short term as well as the long term. Indeed, Lewis A. Coser, Charles Kadushin and Walter W. Powell (1982) agree that the publishing industry "remains perilously poised between the requirements and restraints of commerce and the responsibilities and obligations that it must

bear as a prime guardian of the symbolic culture of the nation" (7). The comparison between formal and informal trainings for creative writers also raises the questions: can creative writing be taught? And if yes, which is the most appropriate institution to offer training for the African writer? In his book, *MFA vs NYC: The Two cultures of American Fiction* (2014), Chad Harbach raises an important issue when he asks whether creative writing can, or should, be taught. He maps out two of the mostly used avenues that would-be writers in the US follow in the hope of realising their dreams: university MFA programmes or heading to the big city, NYC, and trying to make it through the overpopulated literary market. Harbach is however quick to point out the superficial differences between the two approaches, which he notes "can be summed up charticle-style: short stories vs novels; Amy Hempel vs Jonathan Franzen; library copies vs galley copies; *Poets & Writers* vs *The New York Observer*; *Wonder Boys* vs *The Devil Wears Prada*; the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference vs the Frankfurt Book Fair; departmental parties vs publishing parties; literary readings vs publishing parties; staying home vs publishing parties" (13). There are major differences, too, he adds, aesthetic and otherwise, but in the end, each approach "affords its members certain aesthetic and personal freedoms while restricting others; each exerts its own subtle but powerful pressures on the work being produced" (13).

In the analysis of African writers' organisations, one issue stands out – the increasing importance of these organisations within the wider frame of production of literary culture on the continent. It is also a demonstration that the role of literary canonisation in Africa has shifted from the university to include other institutions of literary production whose framing is not confined in the academy. It is a step towards "moving the centre" and ensuring that African literary institutions play a more involved role in the development of its own literature (Thiong'o 1993). It is also an effort to widen the boundaries of literature, especially African literature, through the inclusion of African institutions in the canon making process.

In this regard, the literary organisation is just one of the many literary institutions needed in the growth and development of African literary tradition. The search for political, cultural and economic autonomy among the literary organisations points to the fact that this is a step towards the development of autonomy in the continent's literary landscape as a whole. It is a step towards the development of independent African literary institutions to offer literary validation for the African writer and African literature. This has been demonstrated by the literary journals and organisations' attempt to take over different sectors of literary production from the training of creative writers, editing and publishing to offering parallel

literary competitions and prizes to match international ones such as the Commonwealth or the Caine awards.

In reference to my previous arguments on African print cultures and the production of the aesthetics of suffering, the effect of economic and political patronage has resulted in the presentation of contemporary African literature as an exotic spectacle. One of the solutions offered to move beyond this situation of the continued patronage imposed through foreign symbolic and economic capital has been for African writers and African organisations to fund its own cultural production industry. This has been answered by the investments in creative writing programmes, publishing structures as well as the proliferation of prizes (mainly after 2013) that are based in Africa for African writers and usually funded by local firms. Among the new prizes is the *Jalada* Prize for Literature, offered by the literary magazine *Jalada* and sponsored by Kwani Trust. The prize was launched in 2015 and it aims to award short stories and poetry. The *Kwani*? Manuscript project, 2013, provided the winning writers with a publishing contract in addition to the prize money; Etisalat prize, funded by the mobile telecommunications service provider, Etisalat, was established in Nigeria in 2013; Mabati-Cornel Kiswahili Prize for African Literature, launched in 2014, is co-sponsored by Kenyan business entity, Mabati Rolling Mills, and by Cornell University in the US. The new prizes such as the *Kwani*? Manuscript project, the *Jalada* Prize or the *Writivism* Short Story Prize provide the contemporary African writer with local alternatives to British-based awards for African fiction.

The creation of these awards, publishing platforms and writing programmes affiliated with different local literary organisations is also a clear statement that local institutions are taking charge of the canonisation of African literature. The establishment of such literary outfits is a positive step towards independence from the political, cultural and economic dependence on Western funded and administered prizes and publishers that have encouraged patronage in African literary and cultural production. The new awards, for instance, have managed to address issues that affect creative writing on the continent such as the diversity of language or the provision of economic capital necessary for literary growth. Despite these gains, it is also important to note that although these prizes are managed and presented locally, they are still partly dependent on international funding. Kwani Trust is mainly funded by the Ford Foundation while Etisalat prize's main sponsor is Etisalat (Emirates Telecommunications Corporation), a Middle Eastern telecommunications company. It is also important to note here that the local prizes usually serve as a stepping stone to international awards. The

winning stories are usually later submitted for the Caine or the Commonwealth prizes. The influence of foreign cultural and economic capital cannot therefore be underestimated in the literary prize industry and consequently in African literary and cultural production. It reveals that the search for autonomy remains a slow process especially made so by the lack of financial independence in many of these organisations. As a result local writers are trapped in a Catch-22 situation where the international publishers and literary prizes still remain as major validating agencies for African literature.

African literary organisations and the quest for the everyday stories

Chapter three of this dissertation focused on institutions of literary production, highlighting different African literary institutions such as literary magazines, journals and writers' organisations in an attempt at placing them within the larger framework of literary and cultural production. The rising investment in the African literary sector as demonstrated by the growth of these literary organisations or LINGOs (Strauhs 2013) and creative writers' training institutions has resulted in a high literary output on the continent. Poor economic conditions on the continent, on the other hand, have seen the publishing sector invest highly in the short story genre which is more suited to the internet as a major media outlet. The short story has also acquired a higher cultural and symbolic value because of the fact that major literary prizes for African literature have foregrounded this genre. Major writers' organisations and other literary institutions have continued to intersect with the international literary prize through story submissions and writers affiliations. A CP shortlist or win is not only an award for the writer but for the publisher as well; a CWSSP shortlist or win is not only beneficial to the artist but the literary organisation with which the writer is associated. International literary awards like the Caine or the Commonwealth, therefore, have significantly contributed to raising the symbolic and cultural value of different literary organisations on the continent and beyond.

On the other hand, the preoccupation of the local literary industry is gradually gaining visibility at the global level through the international prizes awarded to literature produced on the continent. I argue that the stories produced in these new literary collectives, and which are slowly finding their way to major prize organisations like the Caine and the Commonwealth, are providing the reader with an alternative to the narratives defined by the economic and political patronage affecting most regions of the continent. In this regard, I examine here how

the preoccupation of local literary organisations with the ordinary everyday stories has led to the de-exoticisation of contemporary African literature at the international literary prize scene.

As previously illustrated in this dissertation, the major literary output from the continent today is centred around a few literary organisations and journals including: *Kwani*?, *Farafina, Chimurenga,* Short Story Day Africa (SSDA) and FEMRITE. The impact of these literary institutions has been affirmed by their participation in the literary prize industry through their continued story submissions to the CP and the writers' annual entries into the CWSSP. In 2013, *Kwani*?'s managing editor, Billy Kahora was, for a second time, a CP shortlisted author. The following year, two of the CP shortlisted stories, including the winning story, were originally published by SSDA. The winner, Okwiri Oduor, is not only affiliated with SSDA but she is also one of the founding members of *Jalada* literary journal. Namwali Serpell's 2015 Caine winning story, "The Sack" was initially published in *Africa39*. Of significance in these stories sourced from local literary institutions is the texts' focus on the ordinary everyday experiences that are not necessarily framed within the aesthetics of violence, pain and suffering. This, I argue, is as a result of a conscious effort by not only the writers but the local publishing outfits, aiming to present a literature that deconstructs the image of African literature as an exotic commodity. The content in these local literary publications depicts a conscious awareness of the position of the African writer as tour guide for consumers of the exotic literary commodity. The writers and publishers have responded by foregrounding more stories that explore the humanity of the characters irrespective of their political environment. In summary, more stories are now originally published locally with the writers and publishers being conscious of the exotic gaze. It is these stories that are increasingly being submitted to the CP for instance, and it increases the chances of more stories that are consciously written and published to deconstruct the image of African literature in the global literary field.

To illustrate, the 2014 CP winning story, "My Father's Head", initially published in SSDA's *Feast, Famine and Potluck* (2013), uses the first-person narrative voice to explore the human emotions surrounding death and mourning. Oduor manages to convey, in beautiful prose poetry, the different tensions that are characterised by loss and memory. The narrator is a lonely young woman working in an old people's home. She has been away from home for a long time and is silently mourning the death of her father. Most of the people she relates with in the story are presented as faceless, nameless people. The reader only gets to know them by

descriptions such as “the woman who hawked candy in the Stagecoach bus”, “the man whose one-roomed house was a kindergarten in the daytime and a brothel in the evening”, or “the woman whose illicit brew had blinded five” (11). It therefore comes as no surprise when the reader learns that no matter how hard she tries, the narrator cannot remember the shape of her father’s head.

It is after meeting the priest from Kitgum that she eventually gains enough courage to summon the image of her father from where it has been buried deep in her memory. The best way the narrator knows how to do this is by drawing, and yet no matter how hard she tries “his head refused to appear within the borders of the paper” (13). The drawing of her father therefore remains unfinished for a long time because it has no head – only a face. Oduor uses the headless drawing of the father figure as a powerful image for the incompleteness of memory in the recreation of the past and of history. Even after she recreates his head, the narrator still admits its inadequacies acknowledging that “in the end, he was a marionette and my memories of him were only scenes in a theatrical display” (12). In this way, Oduor manages to write about several ills that continue to ravage the continent without necessarily fetishising these issues. By recreating the memory of her father, the narrator remembers “the famine undulating deeper into the Horn of Africa” (14) and through the old man at the old people’s home, the violent events of the 1998 bomb blast in Nairobi are recalled without necessarily painting the violence in graphic colours (16).

Efemia Chela’s “Chicken”, shortlisted for the 2014 CP and also included in the SSDA 2013 anthology, follows the life of a young woman away from home who is struggling to gain emotional and financial stability. From a first-person perspective, Kaba introduces the reader to her wealthy family. The story starts with a feast organised by her family to send her off to college. The first section of the story is therefore filled with descriptions of food and drink as the entire extended family join in the preparation and the eating of the food. The second section of the short story is characterised by poverty, emptiness and hunger. When Kaba moves away from home she decided to follow her passion in school instead of pursuing a law degree as her parents wanted. Kaba’s decision angers her parents and they decide to punish her by withdrawing their financial support. The young woman is then forced to move to a poorer part of town and take up a position as an unpaid intern. The story extends to comment on several issues from same sex relationships to egg donation and prostitution as Kaba tries to gain financial and emotional independence.

The major similarity between the two short stories is the fact that they are both framed within food narratives – a conscious construction in the anthology *Feast, Famine and Potluck* (2013). From Chela's story, the title, "Chicken", comes from the narrator's duty to kill the chickens for the feast. The writer describes the mixed cultural background of Kaba by introducing each parent's culture through food:

> From my father's side came slow-cooked beef shin in a giant dented tin pot. Simply done, relying only on the innate flavour of the marbled red cubes of flesh and thinly sliced onion getting to know each other for hours. It was smoked by open charcoal fire and lightly seasoned with nothing but the flecks of salty sweat from nervy Auntie Nchimunya constantly leaning over the steaming pot. Mushrooms were cooked as simply as Sister Chanda's existence. Fungi was hoped for in the night and foraged for at dawn. My favourites were curly-edged, red on top with a yellow underskirt and fried in butter […] My mother, desperate not to be upstaged by her husband, reminded us all of her issue. The Fante chief's daughter, swathed in kente brought kontombire. It was a swamp-like spinach stew flooded with palm oil, thickened with egusi, specked with smoked mackerel and quartered hard-boiled eggs. It was carried to the table by three people, in a boat-shaped wood tureen from our mezzanine kitchen and the ancient forests of Ghana. (37-8)

In Oduor's story, "My Father's Head", food also colours the whole narrative and the earthy taste of roasted groundnuts, the warm street-roasted maize and the aromas of cinnamon flavoured tea, sour lentils and okra soup rise from the paragraphs, culminating in the detailed description of the father's body after he was flattened by a cane tractor. The narrator says that her father's people called to report the death "with a measured delicacy: how his legs were strewn across the road, sticky and shiny with fresh tar, and how one foot remained inside his tyre sandal, pounding the pedal of his bicycle, and how cane juice filled his mouth and soaked the collar of his polyester shirt" (16).

It is important to reiterate here that the anthology in which these stories were originally published was produced under the theme of food. The focus on specific predetermined thematical contents in the production of such short stories has therefore contributed significantly in the de-exoticisation of contemporary African literature. SSDA's other major focus includes the theme of water in 2015 and speculative fiction in 2014. Other South African online journals and magazines whose calls for submissions are framed within

predetermined contents include ITCH and *Prufrock*. The effectiveness of relying on prearranged themes in the production of ordinary everyday stories has been proven most effective especially in the Ankara Press's *Valentine's Day Anthology 2015*. This is a collection of romance stories from across the African continent presented in different languages and formats including photographs and audio recordings. The anthology, published online, was strategically made available to readers on 14 February 2015. The publication was not only set to coincide with the Valentine's Day celebrations, it was also consciously set to be released on the same day that Nigeria's general elections were to be held.[69] In the foreword to the stories, the editors Emma Shercliff and Bibi Bakare-Yusuf note:

> African literature is sometimes accused of presenting a rather depressing portrayal of life across the continent. Whilst we acknowledge that it would be disingenuous for African writers not to engage with the serious issues that frame daily life – issues such as corruption, insecurity, violence, poverty, unemployment and civil unrest, all of which have been highlighted by Nigeria's current election campaign – we feel it is important, as publishers, to do what we can to provide African writing with the space to reflect the stimulating, vibrant, quirky, joyous complexities of life here. (v)

The stories in the collection explore different aspects of love and romance on the continent from Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's "Painted Love" which tells of the heartache of long distance love to Binyavanga Wainaina's same sex relationships in "The Idea Is to Be Sealed In" and Hawa Jande Golakai's "Candy Girl", a story about crime and romance. The writers in this collection include upcoming writers as well as established ones, especially those canonised by the international prizes like Wainaina, Ibrahim, Billy Kahora, Elnathan John and Mukoma wa Ngugi. Through the thematic focus, Ankara press, therefore, is participating in a conscious effort to steer away from the exotic portrayal of different social and political realities on the continent like "Ebola, poverty and terrorism" (Schercliff and Bakare-Yusuf v). This effort is echoed by *Jalada* literary organisation that describes itself on its website as a "pan-African writers' collective." Its publications also follow a predetermined theme and as it describes itself further in its website:

> Our first project was an anthology of short stories (loosely themed around insanity) published in January 2014. Our second, the sex anthology, was published in June

[69] The 2015 Nigeria general elections were first scheduled to be held on 14 February 2015 but the date was later changed to 28 March 2015.

> 2014. Our Latest anthology, published in January 2015, is a collection of short stories and poems centred on the genres of Afrofuturism and AfroSF. (Jalada, "About", n.p)

The Valentine and *Jalada* collections present stories not only in English but in other languages spoken in Africa such as Hausa, Pidgin, Kiswahili, French, Igbo, Yoruba and Kpelle. These platforms are also inclusive in geography too, including writers from Somalia, Liberia, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire among other African countries that have been lowly represented at the international literary award level. The experimentation with language, form and style has been aided by the versatility of the internet as a publishing outlet which has allowed for the presentation of literature not only in print but in audio, video, drawings, paintings and photographs. Binyavanga Wainaina's essay in *Jalada*'s *Afrofuture(s)* (2015) provides an excellent example of the experimentation with form, style and language. The piece is titled: "Wangechi Mutu wonders why butterfly wings leave powder on the fingers, there was a coup today in Kenya."[70] It is a profile of Kenyan artist, Wangechi Mutu. Like the *Ankara* or the *Jalada* collection, Mutu as a visual artist consciously adopts multimodality as a representational strategy. She relies on different media such as paper, paint and wool, incorporating different senses like smell and sound. In general, Mutu's art presents a conglomeration of different media and styles of artistry. Writing in the *Guardian* newspaper (2004), Teju Cole notes of Mutu that:

> She credits her American experience – particularly the exhausting task of attempting to evade foolish stereotypes – for how she finally found a way to incorporate African imagery in her work. If many Americans know little about African culture beyond images of Maasai warriors in National Geographic, this ignorance became fertile ground for Mutu's explorations. The resulting images are visually arresting, both easy and difficult to look at, seductive in their patterning, grotesque in their themes.[71]

By relying on the image of the grotesque and therefore inhabiting the exotic codes, Mutu succeeds in destroying the stereotypes about the continent. For instance, the artwork *Uterine Catarrh* (2005), reprinted in Wainaina's essay in *Jalada*, is a collage made from different ethnographic photos on Africa and uses "glitter, ink and collage on found medical illustration

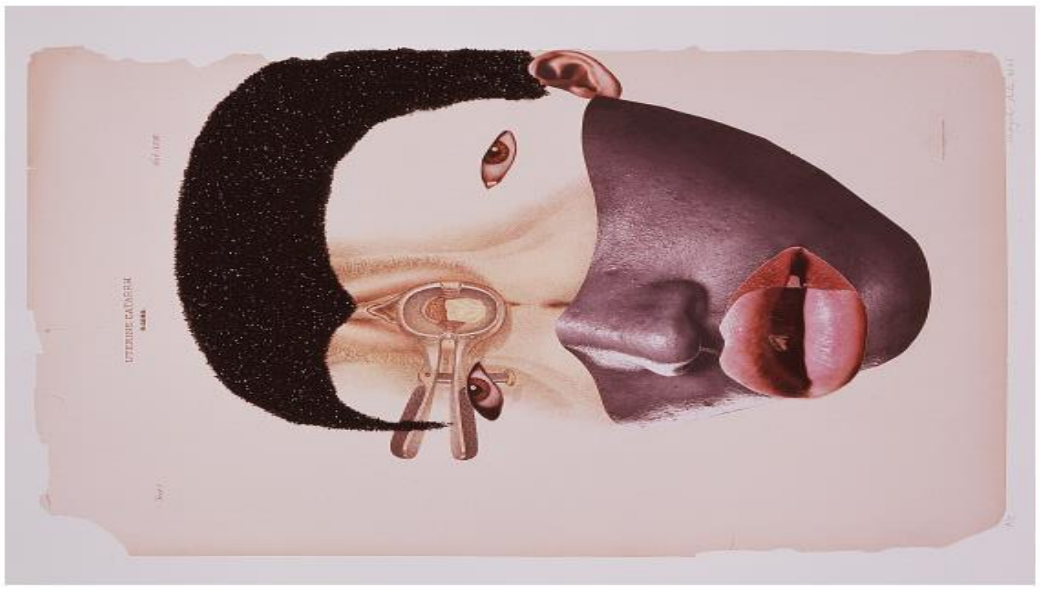
[70] Online. Available at: http://jalada.org/2014/10/16/prelude-to-afrofutures/
[71] Online. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/sep/25/wangechi-mutu-artist-interview-africa-snakes-mermaids

paper."[72] It shows a medical procedure to remove a third eye from an African patient's forehead. However, on the image are pasted luscious full lips, drawing attention to the exoticisation of beauty, despite the stereotypical representation of the African body as grotesque. Wainaina writes:

> 103. *uterine catarrh by Wangechi Mutu*: This yellowing paper is an important piece of medical history. This young man has a third eye – a wisdom to offer? A possible insight? He too is a recipient (knowing or unknowing) of this knowledge – if only from a straight-laced high school lecture about syphilis. Ricord is an early, and substantial, original source about gynecological [sic] disorders. Part of our casual knowledge about this has filtered down from him. Our young man has magazine lips too: cutout pink lipstick lips, large and lush: the sort of lips some pay for collagen to get. How lucky, Wangechi seems to suggest somewhat wickedly? That lips are the one territory we have that are wanted by the magazine perceptions of How You Must Look. A bit of the lip is red, lipstick again. The lips are pasted on, and slightly out of place – and it starts to arrive that what seems grotesque here is not.

Wainaina recreates Mutu's profile in a style of poetry and prose that easily merges with visual presentations of Mutu's art. Her Afrofuturistic art effortless coalesces with Wainaina's Afrofuturistic literature within a piece that traces Kenya's and Africa's political history, diasporic identities and the pan African vision. Wainaina relies on the biography of Mutu to comment on the power of the archive in defining the self, acknowledging in line 2 that "[t]his is *A Short Biography of Us Inside Wangechi Mutu*." Wainaina further deploys one of Mutu's painting titled *Beneath Lies the Power* (2014) to comment on the nature of power and domination. In this art work, Mutu uses visual images to urge the audience to view an object in numerous dimensions in order to understand its complexities. Wainaina complements this idea in line 116 noting that Mutu "is an early African provoking the season of Afro-futures […She] releases us from ugga booga fears of the hegemony that makes these magazines, and freezes us as one-dimensional agents of their glossy spectacle." The investment in local literary publications, which are increasingly gaining global recognition, therefore, helps to write Africa from different perspectives without being confined to the exotic glare that comes with economic and political domination.

[72] This is the caption on Wangechi Mutu's artwork, *Uterine Catarrh* (2005), reproduced in Wainaina's *Jalada* essay.



of this knowledge – if only from a straight-laced high school lecture about syphilis. Ricord is an early, and substantial, original source about gynecological disorders. Part of our casual knowledge about this has filtered down from him. Our young man has magazine lips too: cutout pink lipstick lips, large and lush: the sort of lips some pay for collagen to get. How lucky, Wangechi seems to suggest somewhat wickedly? That lips are the one territory we have that are wanted by the magazine perceptions of How You Must Look. A bit of the lip is red, lipstick again. The lips are pasted on, and slightly out of place – and it starts to arrive that what seems grotesque here is not.

104. "The young man is in good health – and the shapes imposed upon him leave his face with integrity. The questions being asked here seem to be about membership: this black man is, too, an heir of medical and other histories that have come before him – but his choice and participation will be original – his colour, and its history, will

Wangechi. Cowherd Supermodel. You push it down back to the top of your stomach, and stretch your loose mobile mouth to its limits. Whenever you do this, you find that a crowd bubble of gentle laughter makes you the center of friends. But they are hostile now with your weakness in front of them.

98. Kenya is flat. Middle class is broke. Moi season is tired. No money. No Dreams. No Hope. In Kenya. Get a Visa and Run if you can. Anywhere. Or Drink. Or Become a Born Again Christian.

99. Eddie Murphy is Coming to America.

100. Wangechi Mutu is going to America to study Fashion Merchandising for Safari-chic Cyborgettes with longish goat-legs and crippled bleeding gold boots.

101. But first she must study Medicine.

102. Like This.

103. *uterine catarrh* by Wangechi Mutu: This yellowing paper is an important piece of medical history. This young man has a third eye – a wisdom to offer? A possible insight? He too is a recipient (knowing or unknowing)

Left: *Uterine Catarrh*, 2005
Glitter, ink and collage on found medical illustration paper
18 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter

Image 1: A page from Binyavanga Wainaina's essay in *Jalada* incorporating one of Wangechi Mutu's pieces. The artwork used on this page is titled *Uterine Catarrh*, 2005.

These local magazines and journals' experimentation with form, style and language have helped push the boundaries of literature, and especially the short form genre, beyond the definitions set out by institutions of canon formation such as the academia or international award organisations. For instance, the decision in 2002 by the Caine Prize to include internet short stories in the competition pointed to the fact that the award body was responding to the realities of the literary publishing industry in Africa. In this light, is it not time, therefore, for the international prize body to respond, once again, to the changing literary scene in Africa? After all, the 2013 Man Booker International Prize's decision to award the prize to 'short short stories' writer, Lydia Davis, demonstrated a conscious effort of the prize industry to expand the boundaries of the short story genre.

As Maxamed Sharmarke comments in his *Jalada 2015* piece, "A Railway Map", there is the need to rethink the historical borders defined by colonialism and postcolonialism. Using an imaginatively reconstructed railway map of Somalia, Sharmarke also tackles the facts of the peripheries, and points to the importance of inhabiting and owning these margins. Appropriating the railway line, "a technology associated with the opulence of old Europe", he reconstructs a country, linking town to town and giving prominence to each despite the fact that, unlike the colonial railway line, the imagined railway is not driven by the need for economic exploitation.[73] Sharmarke adds that: "This map like the Sapeurs of Kinshasa or Nollywood, appropriates and then imagines what a popular local alternative to the dictatorships of development by IMF might look like, where towns never given second thought by planners are still considered important." Borrowing from Nuttall and Michael's argument in *Senses of Culture* (2000) within the context of South African cultural theorisation, I postulate that these magazines and their stories "argue less for an erasure than for a re-imagining" and that this re-imagining "involves a rethinking of intellectual and artistic work" (13). The process of de-exoticisation is not, therefore, an effort to invert the structures of power and domination by bringing the margin to the centre. Rather, it is an effort at destroying the binary differences of centre and margin within the spaces of literary and cultural production. By choosing to embrace the 'exotic' through claiming and inhabiting the marginal spaces, the stories analysed here and the literary frameworks within which they belong as alternative cultures engage in deconstructing the structures of power and domination in the literary and cultural field. Bhabha (1994) explains that this "interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that

[73] Online. Available at: http://jalada.org/2015/01/14/jalada-02-afrofutures/

entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (38). Occupying and owning the marginal space, the writers engage in levelling hierarchies and structures of power and domination in the international literary marketplace.

Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter are based on the argument that the international literary award industry has become a dominant culture that has continued to influence literature in Africa from the point of production to consumption. In this light, the chapter has focused on the conscious efforts employed by various literary organisations in Africa aiming towards creating literary and cultural autonomy. It acknowledges that alternative cultures exist because mainstream culture is alienating. As the previous chapters in this dissertation have revealed, this alienation is reflected mainly through the economic and political patronage. I have, therefore, explored the different ways in which contemporary African writers are engaged in the search for economic and political autonomy in literary production. This has been achieved through the increasing investments in alternative literary awards, journals, creative writing programmes and the diversification of the publishing sector, especially by the embrace of the digital publishing platform.

This chapter further exposes the contradictions that arise in the search for literary autonomy when the texts produced through the independent creative writing workshops and published locally through the new literary distribution frameworks eventually seeks the validation of the Caine or the Commonwealth prizes. It, however, concludes that the continued links between local literary outfits with international award bodies is a conscious project towards de-exoticisation not only at the local publishing level but at the global award sector. The chapter, therefore, highlights the importance of investments in alternative, and sometimes oppositional, literary cultures as the solution to the economic and political patronage affecting contemporary African literary production.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Negotiating Patronage in the Award Sector

"Literary awards do work – look how the Caine Prize has boosted African Writing."
(Aminatta Forna, 2006 CP Judge)[74]

This study, inspired by a simple urge to find out the meaning and the context behind the phrase "boiling cabbages twice", has led me to examine the process through which literature acquires value. In this quest, I have examined the significance of literary awards in the sector of African literary production. It concludes that the award body is an institution that confers a mark of excellence on a literary text and in the process, it influences not only the consumption of literature but its production as well. In this way, the award industry becomes an important agent of literary canonisation.

I centred on the economic, cultural and symbolic value that is accorded to works of literature, and their creators, through the award industry as a major institution of canonisation. In my introduction, I began by emphasising the intersectionality of the short story genre and prize on the African continent with an emphasis on the Caine Prize for African Writing (CP) and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (CWSSP). As established in chapters two and three, the history of an impoverished publishing industry in many African countries has mainly resulted in the foregrounding of the short story more than other genres such as the novel. In retracing the history of the prize organisations, I explained that the Commonwealth Writers Prize, established in 1987, awarded established and new writers from all over the Commonwealth. The award organisation was initially a book prize but later, in 1996, it begun to award short stories as well. However, since 2013, the prize organisation revised its programme, discontinuing the book award in favour of the short story genre. This new emphasis on the genre has significantly promoted the development of literature on the African continent. Furthermore, I discussed how the launch of the CP in 2000 also played a significant role not only in promoting the short story genre but in encouraging literary growth. Dobrota Pucherová, whose ideas informed my argument throughout the study, indeed acknowledges

[74] See Aminata Forna's newspaper article in the *New York Times* Book Review, 15 July 2006. Available online at: http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/books/article2455373.ece

that since the Caine's inception "the prize has kick-started the career of its winners by providing them with a global visibility leading to publishing contracts with British or American publishers" (14). This point is enforced by the CP organisation which boasts that "its winners and shortlisted candidates have seen their careers immeasurably enhanced, having their books published by mainstream publishers, and winning further prizes with them" (Taylor and Elam, "Preface" 6).

The short story awards in Africa have acted as a stepping stone for writers moving from literary obscurity to the international literary scene. This progression is especially driven by the fact that historically, awards for African literature have been few and less rewarding both financially and culturally than their counterparts in the developed world. The international literary awards for the African short story, led by the CP and the CWSSP, have therefore provided an avenue for local writers to access the global market. Many of these writers are usually less established and, therefore, being shortlisted or winning the Caine or the Commonwealth prizes affords them the cultural value necessary to succeed in the world literary industry. In this regard, awards such as the Caine and the Commonwealth have not only acted as a bridge for the transition from short stories to novels, from upcoming writers to global household names, they have also provided a platform for African writers to gain access to what Sarah Brouillette (2007) terms "the global literary marketplace" in her book of the same title. In this sense, a literary prize not only provides a cash reward for the upcoming writer but it also propels them to international literary circles, mediating access to literary agents and publishing contracts. My study has discussed the process through which writers convert the symbolic, cultural and economic capital gained from the international award industry to influence the literary industry in Africa.

In chapter two, I argued that the award industry is dependent on literary taste but that there is no universally recognised taste. In this light, I focused on the process through which literary taste is acquired and sustained for a literary award institution. James English in *The Economy of Prestige* (2005) notes that the judging panel of an award institution performs an influential role in developing the taste of that particular prize. However, as evidenced in this study, there are several other key players whose influence also affects the taste of an award and, ultimately, the decision on who wins or who fails to win. One of these key players is the publishing industry. The chapter then explores the mechanisms of publishing on the continent and in the larger African diaspora. It acknowledges that the quest for taste involves an analysis of not only the award institutions but the publishing sector too. As John Guillory

explains, an examination of the canon formation process should not only focus on the inclusion and exclusion of texts from the mainstream literary market but should also involve an investigation of the literary production mechanism. Guillory (1993) observes that the problem of canonisation is linked to unequal distribution of cultural capital and unequal access to the means of literary production.

My research concedes that even in the absence of numerous literary awards on the continent, the poor publishing sector has ensured that the act of publication sometimes becomes an award in itself. The publishing sector directly influences the award institutions and this research has noted that countries with high investments in the publishing sector, such as South Africa and Nigeria, are also highly represented in local as well as international awards. The CP, just like many other contemporary literary prizes, awards only published works. Submission to the prize is done by the publisher, not the writer, and this further foregrounds the relevance of the publishing sector. In this regard, the taste of the judges is directly influenced by the taste of the publishers. Other major taste makers include business sponsors whose influence, or patronage, indirectly affects the literature produced. In general, chapter two illustrates how different factors such as publishing, language, judging panels, the media, the academia and funding organisations influence the production of literature and how this is reflected in the prize-winning works. I have focused on the different factors that influence the taste of a prize to argue that the literary culture is always determined by the social, political and economic factors framing its production. Each award organisation and jury is influenced by different social, economic and political realities that lead to the privileging of certain literary works over others.

The centrality of the publishing sector in the award industry is the main idea that drives the discussion in chapter three. I have argued that the literary prize industry is inherently connected to the print cultures of a region. In this regard, I investigate the history of publishing in Africa, paying close attention to the history of literary journals and magazines on the continent, in an effort to link the print cultures with the contemporary literary award institutions. The chapter further engages with contemporary literary establishments to explore the different ways in which the prize industry influences, and is influenced, by these literary outfits. I examine the significance of pioneer literary periodicals in Africa such as *Black Orpheus*, *Transition*, *Drum*, *Staffrider* among others, in order to establish their contribution, both symbolically and culturally, to contemporary literary production on the continent. The pioneer literary organisations and magazines, Peter Benson (1987), Peter D. McDonald

(2009) and Krieger (2004) note, were established to fill the gap left by mainstream publishers in literary outputs. The journals and magazines also gave a voice to "the black world's urgent public issues" (Krieger 398). Economic dependency, leading to patronage, is identified as the major reason behind the dearth of these literary outfits. However, since 2000, the literary scene in Africa has been vibrant with new and upcoming journals and literary organisations, some of which are fashioned from the pioneer literary magazines. In this way, the earlier journals such as *Drum*, *Transition* and *Black Orpheus* continue to lend their symbolic capital to new ones such as *Kwani*?, *Chimurenga*, *Jalada*, and FEMRITE. The new journals and magazines are products of several literary organisations which, as the study has established, are intrinsically linked with contemporary and international awards such as the Caine and Commonwealth prizes. The link is in the form of funding, joint writers' training sessions as well as through the annual story submissions to the two prizes. Lack of economic independence, however, has played a significant role in influencing the literary output from these organisations. Donor dependency has resulted in a literature that is coloured by patronage from the point of production to consumption.

The fourth chapter of this study explores the process through which contemporary African literature, mediated through the international prize, acquires value in the global literary market – a process through which social and political realities on the continent like civil wars, colonialism and apartheid, disease and poor political leadership become the single story through which Africa is narrated in the global literary scene. The question of African writers and the burden of representing the continent is explored here from the perspective of an award industry that foregrounds the stories of painful socio-historical and political realities on the continent. I analyse the centrality of pain and suffering in prize-winning and shortlisted stories from the perspective of commodity fetishism that leads to the exoticisation of postcolonial literature (Huggan 2001). My reading of the winning stories explores the tropes war, displacement, disease and death in an effort to deconstruct the stereotypes of Africa as a place of pain and disillusionment. I argue against a fixed interpretation of the role of pain and suffering not only in the prize-winning works but in postcolonial literature in general.

Postcolonial writers are conscious of their global positioning in the award industry and my study further explores the different ways in which African writers align themselves to market/prize demands. This dissertation discusses the effects of donor dependency in literary production, concluding that without economic autonomy, African literature will have to work within the limitations of external influence and patronage. My research further recognises

that prize writers are also aware of the different power structures that create hierarchies within the literary industry and are actively involved in deconstructing these structures through the visibility created by the international literary prize. Acknowledging that the 'exotic' tag in postcolonial literature is imposed on a work, I argue that contemporary African writers have learnt to work within the limitations of international prizes and publishers by employing 'strategic exoticism' (Huggan 2001) and 'authorial self-consciousness' (Brouillette 2007). This study, therefore, emphasises the importance of marginality in contemporary African literature, suggesting that for writers who have historically been classified as belonging to the margins of literature, it is important to own that position and use it to dismantle the codes of power and domination. Marginality is explored here as a representative of the symbolic power of the texts and is used to underscore the significance of the political, cultural and economic power imbalances associated with cultural and literary production in Africa. It calls for the recuperation of agency in contemporary African literature.

Different local organisations have responded to the patronage imposed through economic dependency by establishing locally funded programmes aimed at producing a literature independent from any external influences. One of the methods revealed here is by local literary organisations establishing creative writers' training programmes as well as new literary prizes that seem to parallel the Caine and Commonwealth awards. For instance, the *Farafina* annual creative writers workshop held in Nigeria continues to attract huge numbers of upcoming writers who aim to polish their writing skills through the workshops. The *Writivism* festival, established in 2013 also provides creative writing programmes in various parts of the continent throughout the year. *Kwani?* and FEMRITE are other organisations that are actively involved in training creative writers on the continent as well as holding local writing competitions. The stories written and edited through such sessions are the ones that eventually find their way to the Caine and Commonwealth prizes. By exploring the different avenues pursed by contemporary writers to influence literary production at the international prize market, this study acknowledges that the production of cultural and literary value in Africa is framed within knowledge economies. It therefore emphasises the importance of economic autonomy in literary production.

My research, however, recognises the impossibility of writers' independence, especially in the absence of financial capital. While organisations like FEMRITE and *Kwani?* have

attempted to create a literature uncoloured by financial patronage, the reality, as this study reveals, is that these organisations are still dependent on international funding organisations, such as the Ford Foundation or the Humanistic Institute for Social Development (HIVOS), and the cultural capital provided by international prizes such as the Caine. I argue that African writers are participants in a crowded global literary marketplace and they, therefore, are compelled to align themselves within the social, political and economic frameworks by devising strategies of visibility within the literary world. In view of the scope of this study, my research raises several questions especially regarding the increasing significance of the place of contemporary African literary organisations as canonising agents. The prospects created by publication forums such as *Jalada*, *Saraba*, *Ankara* and *Farafina*, among others, offer a wide room for future research in the context of the changing culture of literary production in Africa.

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